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# Agrarian Reforms In India

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GRIGORY KOTOVSKY

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## PREFACE TO THE INDIAN EDITION

THIS book was completed in the spring of 1959. Naturally, therefore, the characterization of the agrarian reforms in India given in it applied to the situation as it obtained at the close of 1958.

In the three years that have passed since then, the agrarian reforms and the struggle waged around them have further developed. The author had access to many new materials, particularly as a result of his visit to India in January-February 1961 under the scientific exchange arrangements between the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Indian Statistical Institute. New analyses of the agrarian reforms under way in India have appeared in the Soviet Union and other countries and, in particular, in India. All of this has made it necessary to revise some parts of the text for the English edition and to add some new material.

Indian readers should bear in mind that the Russian edition was meant mainly for readers little familiar with the agrarian structure of modern India, and while explanations of different terms have been omitted from the translation, some details and explanations still remain in the text which may appear superfluous to Indian readers.

The author wishes to take this opportunity to express his gratitude to the Institute of the Peoples of Asia of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Oriental Languages Publishing House for undertaking the translation of the work into English and the People's Publishing House for undertaking its publication. He also wishes to thank all colleagues who have promoted the translation and publication of the work.

The author hopes that publication of the book in English would further Soviet-Indian scientific cooperation and serve, to some extent at least, as a contribution to the wide theoretical discussion going on around the problem of agrarian reforms in India.

*Moscow,  
15 January 1964*

G. KOTOVSKY



## PREFACE TO THE RUSSIAN EDITION

ON 15 August 1947 the national flag of India went up over the historical Red Fort in the Capital City of Delhi. The abolition of British colonial rule opened up before the industrious people of India wide vistas of all-round development. The young sovereign state set out to consolidate its economic and political independence and to overcome its economic backwardness.

As essential precondition for India's successful economic and political development is a democratic solution of the agrarian question, accompanied by the technical reconstruction of agriculture. 'After the colonialists have been expelled', N. S. Khrushchov said, 'and the general national problems essentially solved, the people seek a solution to vital social problems. This applies above all to the land and peasant problem and the problem of labour's struggle against capital.'<sup>1</sup>

India is an agrarian country. According to the 1961 Census, 82.2 per cent of her population live in villages, with some 70 per cent deriving their basic income from agriculture. In 1958-59 the share of agricultural and industrial sectors in the country's national income, according to official estimates, was Rs 60,400 million and 21,400 million respectively.<sup>2</sup> This structure of the Indian economy resulted from nearly two centuries of colonial exploitation by British imperialism.

The agrarian question is one of the most important and complicated problems facing modern India. At the time India gained her independence semi-feudal forms of exploitation predominated in agriculture. Colonial exploitation and the feudal survivals in the countryside kept India's

<sup>1</sup> N. S. Khrushchov, *Control Figures for the Economic Development of the USSR for 1959-1965* (Moscow, 1960), p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> *India, 1961: A Reference Annual* (Delhi, 1961), p. 172.

agriculture extremely backward, and the elimination of the semi-feudal production relations coupled with industrialization of the country will pave the way for an upsurge of agricultural production.

Lenin has shown that there are two ways of solving the agrarian problem, and that they are determined by the interests of the different classes of bourgeois society.

One way is the obliteration of landlord property in land in the interests of the whole of the peasantry, with complete elimination of the landlord class. The history of the Indian peasantry's anti-feudal struggle, which has developed since the early twenties of this century, is at the same time a history of struggle for solving the agrarian question in a revolutionary 'peasant-proletarian' way. Historical experience has shown that a radical solution of the agrarian question in the interests of the peasantry was accomplished in some countries of the East following the Second World War precisely through the agrarian revolution. This was the basis of the people's democratic revolution which was carried out under the leadership of the working class and its party. Moreover, the anti-feudal agrarian reforms in the People's Republic of China, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Korean People's Democratic Republic were but a prelude to the socialist reorganization of agriculture.

The other way is the carrying out of bourgeois-landlord agrarian reforms, by means of which semi-feudal landholding is partially restricted and is then gradually transformed into capitalist landholding, with the strengthening of the stratum of the rich peasants and the impoverishment and proletarianization of the vast majority of the peasantry. Thus, this way means the solution of the agrarian question in the interests of the national bourgeoisie and, to a certain extent, of the landlord class at the expense of the bulk of the peasantry.

Since India had gained independence in 1947, various measures have been taken which at the bottom are an attempt by the national bourgeoisie to solve the agrarian question in the second, the bourgeois-landlord way. They

include reform of the system of landownership and cultivation, encouragement of different forms of agricultural cooperatives, and some other state-capitalist measures to advance agriculture, chiefly through the system of Community Projects and National Extension Services.

These legislative and economic measures constitute a single complex favouring the gradual switch-over of India's agriculture to the path of capitalist development.

In this work, the author has set himself the task of analyzing only the agrarian reforms and not the whole of this complex, that is, the nature, implementation and socio-economic consequences of the laws which have introduced changes in the system of landownership and cultivation. In other words, the subject of our study is the legislation covering the abolition of the zamindari system, the problem of fixing the maximum size for holdings (the imposition of ceilings on holdings), the movement for voluntarily releasing land in favour of the landless and land-starved part of the rural population (*bhoodan* and *gramdan*), tenancy legislation, and also consolidation of holdings.

The chief sources utilized for this work were official publications of the central government and governments of the States, reports of investigations into the country's agrarian economy by government and scientific organizations and individual scientists. Extensive use has been made of the publications of the Indian National Congress, the Communist Party of India, the All-India Kisan Sabha, and of some other political organizations, and the writings of the leaders of India's workers' and peasants' movement.

Research literature on agrarian reforms in India is very voluminous. Works that should be mentioned in the first place (in order of their appearance) are those by Prof P. N. Driver, Dr G. D. Patel, Dr P. C. Joshi, Prof Karunamoy Mukerji, Shri Guru Charan Singh, Shri H. D. Malaviya, the late K. G. Sivaswamy, Shri Bhowani Sen, Shri E. M. S. Namboodiripad, Shri Gulzari Lal Nanda, Dr A. M. Khusro, Shri N. Prasada Rao, Prof Baljit Singh, and of the American economists and sociologists Prof Daniel Thorner,

F. F. Moore and C. A. Freyding.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a good many interesting articles on the subject appeared in Indian and foreign periodicals.

In Soviet Indological literature, studies of the problem of agrarian reforms will be found in the works of several authors. At first there appeared small articles in the nature of surveys by M. A. Maksimov, A. A. Maslennikov, and the present writer.<sup>4</sup> In 1959 appeared the first (Russian) edition of this book; in 1960, articles by A. I. Medovoi<sup>5</sup> and R. A. Ulyanovsky,<sup>6</sup> and in 1961, articles by M. A. Maksimov

<sup>3</sup> P. N. Driver, *Problems of Zamindari and Land Tenure Reconstruction in India* (Bombay, 1949); G. D. Patel, *Agrarian Reforms in Bombay* (Bombay, 1950); P. C. Joshi, *UP Zamindari Abolition* (Lucknow, 1962); Karuna Mukerji, *Land Reforms* (Calcutta, 1952); Guru Charan Singh, *Recent Trends in Agrarian Reforms* (Delhi, 1952); H. D. Malaviya, *Land Reforms in India* (New Delhi, 1954, reprinted 1955); G. D. Patel, *The Indian Land Problem and Legislation* (Bombay, 1954); K. G. Sivaswamy, *Trends in Land Reforms* (Madras, 1954); Bhowani Sen, *Indian Land System and Land Reforms* (New Delhi, 1955); E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *Agrarian Reforms: A Study of the Congress and Communist Approach* (New Delhi, 1956); Gulzarilal Nanda, *Progress of Land Reforms in India* (New Delhi, 1957); G. D. Patel, *The Land Problem of Reorganized Bombay State* (Bombay, 1957); A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition and Land Reforms in Hyderabad* (Hyderabad, 1958); N. Prasada Rao, *Congress Agrarian Reforms: Gaps and Loopholes* (New Delhi, 1959); N. Prasada Rao, *Progress of Land Reform: A Critical Review* (New Delhi, 1960); Baljit Singh, *Next Step in Village India: A Study of Land Reforms and Group Dynamics* (Bombay, 1961); N. Prasada Rao, *Land Reforms under Congress* (New Delhi, 1962); F. F. Moore and C. A. Freyding, *Land Tenure Legislation in Uttar Pradesh* (Berkley, 1955); D. Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India* (Delhi, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> See *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodniye otnosheniya* (World Economy and International Relations), No. 6, 1957; and No. 9, 1958; *Novoye Vremya* (New Times), No. 48, 1953.

<sup>5</sup> Published in the collection of articles *Voprosy ekonomiki stran vostoka* (Economic Problems of the Eastern Countries) published by the Institute of International Relations, Moscow, 1960.

<sup>6</sup> *Ekonomika sovremennoi Indii* (The Economy of Modern India), Moscow, 1960, a collection of articles published by the Institute of the Peoples of Asia of the USSR Academy of Sciences; see also his article in the journal '*Narody Azii i Afriki*' (The Peoples of Asia and Africa), Nos. 1 and 2, 1961.

and V. G. Rastyannikov,<sup>7</sup> A. A. Maslennikov,<sup>8</sup> and M. A. Maksimov and A. A. Maslennikov.<sup>9</sup>

In this monograph the author has made use, as far as he was able to, of the factual material contained in the works of the above-mentioned authors, and their deductions and general conclusions were taken into account.

In 1956-57 and again in 1961 the author spent some time on scientific study missions in India, where, together with V. G. Rastianikov, his colleague from the Institute of the Peoples of Asia, he visited a number of villages in the States of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Madras, Mysore, Kerala and Bombay (now Maharashtra) and collected data on the types of landlord and peasant economies and talked with representatives of different classes of the rural population of several districts to check his preliminary conclusions based on the study of published literature.

Very important for the author were the visits to scientific research and government institutions, and meetings and talks with economists and sociologists, among whom must be mentioned such prominent Indian scientists as Prof P. C. Mahalanobis, Dr D. R. Gadgil, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao and Dr B. N. Ganguli, and such experts on the agrarian problem in India as Dr J. P. Bhattacharjee, Shri Baudhayan Chatterji, Prof M. L. Dantwala, Shri A. K. Gopalan, Dr Sulekh Chandra Gupta, Shri V. M. Jakhade, Dr P. C. Joshi,

<sup>7</sup> The collection of articles *Agrarniye reformy v stranakh vostoka* (Agrarian Reforms in Eastern Countries), Moscow, 1961, published by the Institute of the Peoples of Asia of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Agrarian reforms in India were analysed by them also in an article printed in the magazine *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodniye otnosheniya* No. 5, 1959, and in the Preface to the Russian edition of D. Thorner's book mentioned above.

<sup>8</sup> *Agrarniye reformy v stranakh vostoka* (Agrarian Reforms in Eastern Countries). He is the author, too, of the chapter on agrarian reforms in India in the book *Agrarno-krestyans'ky vopros v suvernennykh slaborazvitykh stranakh* (The Agrarian and Peasant Question in Underdeveloped Sovereign Countries), Moscow, 1961, published by the Institute of World Economy and International Relations.

<sup>9</sup> See *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodniye otnosheniya*, No. 12, 1961.

Dr A. M. Khusro, Dr A. M. Lorenzo, Shri Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri, Shri H. D. Malaviya, Dr G. C. Mandal, Prof Karunamoy Mukerji, Prof Ramkrishna Mukherjee, Shri Ameer Raza, Dr S. R. Sen, Shri Bhowani Sen, Shri A. N. Seth and Prof Daniel Thorner.

The author avails himself of the opportunity to express his profound gratitude to all friends in India who have helped him in one way or another to broaden his knowledge of the agrarian question in India. However, he wishes to state, that they in no way share responsibility for the views and conclusions expressed in this book.

**G. KOTOVSKY**

AGRARIAN REFORMS IN INDIA



## CHAPTER I

# The Indian Village on Eve of Agrarian Reforms

By the time India attained independence, there had developed in the country extremely varied and intricate systems of land tenure. For the purpose of this work, however, it is enough to describe the main features of India's agrarian structure and analyse the salient trends of social and economic development of the villages in the forties and early fifties of the present century<sup>1</sup>.

### Predominance of Semi-Feudal Landownership

The forms of property in land existing in India today—state, landlord and peasant—are genetically related to the forms of feudal land tenures which had taken shape by the time of the country's colonial enslavement and which were further evolved under British rule.

In the course of the conquest of India, most of her territory on which lived the bulk of her population was made a component part of the provinces of so-called British India.

After conquering the Indian feudal states, the British

<sup>1</sup> Most detailed analysis of agrarian relations in India in the period under reference is given in the article 'Agrarniye otnosheniya v Indii' (Agrarian Relations in India), by G. G. Kotovsky, in *Sovetskoye vostokovedeniye* (Soviet Oriental Studies), No. 4, 1955; 'Nekotoriye osobennosti formirovaniya i ekspluatatsii selskokhozyaistvennogo proletariata v kolonialnoi Indii' (Some Specific Features in the Formation and Exploitation of the Agricultural Proletariat in Colonial India), by M. A. Maksimov and V. G. Rastyannikov, in *Sovetskoye vostokovedeniye* (Soviet Oriental Studies), No. 6, 1956, and 'Indiya—agrarniye otnosheniya' (India—Agrarian Relations), by G. G. Kotovsky in the collection of articles: *Agrarniye otnosheniya v stranakh vostoka* (Agrarian Relations in Eastern Countries). (Moscow, 1958).

kept and made use of the institution of the state as a super-landlord. They established full and direct control over the principal sources of irrigation, most of the forests and uncultivated land, and concentrated in their hands vast amounts of the receipts from the land revenue.

When India attained independence, the rights of supreme landownership automatically passed on to the Indian Republic.

In 1951-52, the government held under their ownership some 92 per cent of the forest land<sup>2</sup> and some 31 per cent of topographically usable area (mainly virgin land and pastures).<sup>3</sup>

While the proprietary rights to a large part of the uncultivated land and forests were reserved by the state, the bulk of the cultivated land belonged to private landlords.

Basing themselves in the right of 'supreme landowners of the country' (Marx), the British put through various land-revenue reforms, adapting the forms of land tenure and patterns of cultivation inherited from feudalism to meet the needs of the colonial enslavement and exploitation. By the middle of the 19th century three basic land-revenue systems had been gradually introduced in the provinces of British India: the zamindari, ryotwari and mahalwari—all serving the same ends, namely, to conserve for the British colonialists the feudal exploitation of the Indian peasantry.

The zamindari land-revenue system was instituted by confirming the right of private ownership of land to individuals, generally from the upper strata of the feudal class.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, India, 1954* (Delhi, 1956), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated from the data given in the following publication: *The National Sample Survey, Eighth Round: July 1954-March 1955, No. 10: First Report on Land Holdings, Rural Sector* (Delhi, 1958), pp. 32, 65 (hereafter referred to as *National Sample Survey, No. 10*).

<sup>4</sup> In Soviet literature, the introduction of the zamindari land-revenue system has been treated in the following works: 'Agrarnaya politika angliyskikh kolonizatorov v Indii—Konets XVIII-nachalo XIX veka' (The Agrarian Policy of the British Colonialists in India in Late 18th and Early 19th Centuries), by K. A. Antonova, in *Izvestia A.N. SSSR, seriya istorii i filosofii* (Bulletin of the USSR Academy of Sciences, History and Philosophy Series), vol. VII, No. 1 (March, 1950), and 'K voprosu ob ustanovleniyi postoyannogo

The British colonialists sanctioned by law the specific local forms of feudal land tenures which they found in different parts of India in late 18th and early 19th centuries. That is why by the time the agrarian reforms were under way, in most of the states the Zamindars had been divided into several class groups and their legal status as private land-owners regulated by special laws enacted at different times by the colonial authorities.<sup>5</sup>

Adding to the multitude of forms of land tenure, so characteristic of India, was the retention in the zamindari areas of the large stratum of feudal sub-proprietors of different types.

In the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh) the holders of inferior proprietary rights numbered some 377,000 in 1954, and they held approximately 1,000,000 of the 41,000,000 acres of land owned by the Zamindars.<sup>6</sup> In Bihar they held 1,300,000 acres of the 24,500,000 held by the Zamindars.<sup>7</sup>

The tenure-holders of various types did not in fact possess the proprietary rights on land but were just receivers of rent. Here is an illustration. On the eve of World War II tenure-holders in some Bengal districts collected from ryots rent averaging from six to nine rupees per acre and paid the Zamindars from 0.5 to 2.5 rupees per acre.<sup>8</sup> In Uttar Pradesh, too, the tenure-holders pocketed the larger part of the rent, the Zamindars getting less. In the Agra district of UP the rent paid by tenants averaged five to six

oblozheniya po sisteme zamindari v Bengalii' (On the Introduction of the Permanent Settlement under the Zamindari System in Bengal), by E. N. Komarov, in *Uchoniye zapiski instituta vostokoveniya* (Proceedings of the Institute of Oriental Studies), vol. XII, (Moscow, 1955).

<sup>5</sup> That is why feudal landlords of this type were called differently in different states: in Oudh, *talukdars*; in Madhya Pradesh, *malguzars*, in Bombay *khots*, *narwadars*, and so on, in Assam, *lakhirajdars*, and so on. However, the most common name for feudal landowners of this type has been *zamindars*.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee (hereafter referred to as RUPZAC, vol. II (Allahabad, 1948), pp. 7-8.

<sup>7</sup> RUPZAC, vol. I, p. 233.

<sup>8</sup> Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Bengal (hereafter referred to as RLRCB), vol. V (Calcutta, 1941), p. 568.

rupees per acre, and the rents paid by the tenure-holders to the Zamindars averaged two rupees per acre.<sup>9</sup>

During British rule transfer of title to portion of rent and parts of estates took place on a large scale. This led to the emergence of numerous layers of intermediaries—rent-receivers in addition to the tenure-holders, who had survived from the days of feudalism. The system of conferring rent-receiving rights among increasing number of developed intermediaries developed particularly in Bengal. Here links in the chain of these middlemen reached, in some places, more than a score, and often one and the same individual possessed several titles, each entitling him to portion of the rent. Before World War II, in 153,200 estates in Bengal, rent collected from tenants was divided among different groups of tenure-holders who together possessed 2.7 million titles.<sup>10</sup> The system of receiving rent through landlord-type of intermediate interests (tenure-holders) was developed to the largest extent in North India (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Assam) and, to a smaller extent, in South and Central India (Bombay and Madras).

In the process of creating the zamindari land-revenue-system, the British confirmed the proprietary right of members of the feudal class as well as of priests, which was why a certain part of the land in this category was owned by different religious and charitable institutions. In the old Madras Province (including the present Andhra State) this type of semi-feudal holdings amounted to roughly 10 per cent of all cultivated land in the State.<sup>11</sup> Some temples had vast land-holdings. For instance, in the former Cochin State, the Thriuvilwamala Devaswom owned 3,500 acres, of which 2,000 were land under irrigation.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> RUPZAC, vol. II, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> RLRCB, vol. III (Calcutta, 1940), p. 107. The process of sub-infeudation in Bengal went on up to very recently [see: Famine Inquiry Commission. *Report on Bengal* (Delhi, 1945), p. 51].

<sup>11</sup> Calculated from the data contained in V. V. Sayana's book *The Agrarian Problems of the Madras Province* (Madras, 1949), pp. 47, 48.

<sup>12</sup> Report of the *Agrarian Problem Enquiry Committee* (Ernakulam, 1949), p. 193.

It should be mentioned that the zamindari land-revenue system in Uttar Pradesh formally encompassed not only landlord holdings but also some groups of peasant holdings. In 1945, Zamindars who paid up to Rs. 25 as land revenue (owners of a few acres) made up 84.8 per cent of all the Zamindars in the State.<sup>13</sup> A Zamindar of this group, the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee observed, 'is essentially a cultivator and not a rent-receiver.'<sup>14</sup> Peasant Zamindars came from the upper stratum of the medieval village community.

However, the bulk of the land was concentrated in the hands of the landlord Zamindars. According to the data compiled by the above committee, the big Zamindars who paid more than Rs. 250 land revenue and made up 1.5 per cent of all Zamindars, held 58 per cent of the total land.<sup>15</sup> According to the same source, the small Zamindars held no more than about 15 per cent of the total land.

A considerable number of Zamindar-type landlords held a few hundred acres or even no more than a few score acres, but among them could be found real magnates who owned hundreds of thousands of acres. This group of very wealthy landlords, which included the rulers of the princely states constituted the core of the feudal-landlord class, held the bulk of the land in the districts and provinces in which the zamindari land-revenue system obtained.<sup>16</sup>

The Zamindars and rulers of Indian States became the chief supporters of British imperialism in India. That is why the Zamindars, being taxpayers, were placed in a privileged position as compared with the other groups of landowners.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> RUPZAC, vol. II, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., vol. I, p. 343.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> In Uttar Pradesh, the 804 biggest landlords, who constituted 0.4 per cent of all Zamindars, held roughly 25 per cent of the land (RUPZAC, vol. I, p. 343). Big landowners were to be found also among religious grantees; for instance, in the Darrang District, Assam, two temple holdings amounted to 700 acres. See: *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, vol. I (Shillong, 1946), p. LXXIII.

<sup>17</sup> In 1936-37, Zamindars in Madras paid land revenue averaging Rs. 0.4 per acre, and landholders in ryotwari areas paid Rs. 2.5 per acre (RLRCB, vol. V, p. 533).

They secured for themselves the bulk of the income derived from the semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry. Attesting to this are the data given in Table 1.

TABLE I

## Ratio of Land Revenue to Total Rentals Received by Zamindars

State	Ratio of revenue	State	Ratio of revenue
Madras	25	Bengal (pre-partition)	23
Bihar	7	West Bengal	14
Uttar Pradesh	39	Assam*	6

The sources used for this calculation are RLRBC, vol. I, pp. 56-57; *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, vol. I, p. xxxii; B. V. Narayanaswami Naidu, *Madras Finance* (Madras, 1948), p. 37; RUPZAC, vol. II, p. 87; *Bihar Statistical Handbook* (Patna, 1954), pp. 128, 130; H. D. Malaviya, *Land Reforms in India* (New Delhi, 1954), p. 142.

\*19 estates in Goalpara District.

Some groups of the zamindar-type landlords were entirely exempted from paying land revenue. In Assam, for instance, there were 1,511 such landlords, whose holdings amounted to 220,390 acres.<sup>18</sup>

The British strove in every way to protect the economic basis of their allies—the feudal landlords, their landed estates. To this end, many zamindari estates were declared to be inalienable and heritable subject to the right of primogeniture, and administration of the estates of bankrupt Zamindars was taken over by Courts of Wards, that is, under a trusteeship of the colonial state.

Thus the zamindars—the core of the landlord class—emerged as the chief political support of British imperialism in India.

By the beginning of the agrarian reforms, the zamindari land-revenue system had completely covered the States (Provinces) of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In addition, zamindars had holdings amounting to several

<sup>18</sup> *The Assam Land Revenue Manual*, vol. I, p. XIX.

million acres in the other States—the former Provinces of British India—except the Punjab. In Assam, the Zamindars' estates amounted to 9 per cent of the total area of privately held land; in Orissa, 81 per cent; in Madhya Pradesh, 41; in Bombay, about 7 per cent, and in Madras, including Andhra State, 27 per cent.<sup>19</sup>

The ryotwari land-revenue system was introduced by endowing with the rights of private landowners members of the village community enjoying full and equal rights and the feudalized upper stratum, as well as peasant members of the community who did not enjoy full rights, artisans and servants of the community but who paid land revenue direct to the state.<sup>20</sup>

Confirmed by the British in their rights as private owners of their land, the members of the feudalized upper stratum became ryot landlords. At the same time, a good part of the peasant ryots, crushed by the weight of colonial exploitation, lost their hand, which gradually became concentrated in the hands of the landlords, moneylenders and traders. This process, which began in the 19th century, gathered momentum with the advent of the epoch of imperialism.

An illustration of the concentration of the land is given in Table 2 (the data are for Madras State). It should be mentioned that the data are not strictly those of landownership in the strict sense of the term, but of pattadars. As

<sup>19</sup> Calculated from data compiled from the following sources: *Indian Land Revenue Statistics 1952-53 and 1953-54* (Delhi, 1956), pp. 4-6; The Famine Inquiry Commission. *Final Report* (Madras, 1945), p. 440. The area of the States (provinces) was taken at it was before the princely states were merged with them in 1947-1949.

<sup>20</sup> In Soviet literature, the introduction of the ryotwari system has been treated in the following works: 'K voprosu o vvedenii sistemy raiatwari v Indii' (On the Introduction of the Ryotwari System in India), by K. A. Antonova, in *Kratkiye soobshcheniya Instituta vostokovedeniya* (Short Report of the Institute of Oriental Studies), No. X (Moscow, 1953), and 'Agrarniye otnosheniya v Makharashtre v poslednei treti XIX—nachala XX veka' (Agrarian Relations in Maharashtra in the Last Third of the 19th Century and Early 20th), by G. G. Kotovsky, in the collection of articles *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnaya dvizheniya v Indii i deyatelnost B. G. Tilaka* (The National Liberation Movement in India and the Activity of B. G. Tilak, Moscow, 1958).

one and the same individual may hold several parcels in one or more villages and each parcel is entered in the village land record as an independent holding, the data considerably understate the extent of the concentration.

TABLE 2

*Distribution of Holdings in Different Groups of Pattadars in Madras State, 1950-51*

Assessment group in Rs.	Average size of holding in acres	Percentage of the number of patas	Percentage of the extent of holding
1 or less	0.71	22.38	4.08
1-10	2.68	54.91	37.85
10-30	6.36	16.34	26.73
30-50	10.89	3.70	10.36
50-100	18.17	1.81	8.48
100-250	37.39	0.66	6.32
250-500	75.08	0.14	2.72
500-1,000	154.12	0.05	1.82
Over 1,000	476.18	0.01	1.64
		100.00	100.00

Source: *Monthly Digest of Economics and Statistics*, Madras State, vol. III, No. 5 (August 1952), pp. 6-7.

According to the table, the pattadars who paid 30 rupees or more in land revenue and who made up 6.37 per cent of all pattadars, held 31.34 per cent of the land. Affording an interesting comparison are the findings of the Research Section of the Tamilnad Congress Committee, which H. D. Malaviya has cited.<sup>21</sup> According to the enquiry conducted by the committee in Madras State in 1954, holders of over nine acres, who made up altogether 6.5 per cent of the pattadars, held 31.6 per cent of the total land. Even higher was the concentration of the best land, the irrigated land. According to the same source, 57 per cent of the total irrigated land was held by holders of more than nine acres.

Equally high was the concentration of holdings in the ryotwari areas in Bombay State. According to data from the

<sup>21</sup> H. D. Malaviya, *Land Reforms in India*, p. 178.

enquiry conducted in the latter half of 1953 in Maharashtra, owners of the larger holdings, who constituted but 10 per cent of the ryots, held 44 per cent of the total land. In Konkan, nine per cent of the landholders owned 58 per cent of the total land.<sup>22</sup>

According to official figures, in 1952-53 ryots in the former Bombay State who had holdings of up to five acres made up 53 per cent of all landholders and held 14 per cent of the land, and ryots with holdings of 25 acres or more made up 8 per cent of the landholders and possessed 40 per cent of the total land.<sup>23</sup>

In Assam, according to a sample survey conducted in 1948-49, households holding more than 50 bighas made up 4.2 per cent of total households in the Darrang District, 4.2 per cent in the Sibsagar District and 3.6 per cent in the Lakhimpur District, comprising respectively 22.4 per cent, 20.1 per cent and 16.9 per cent of the total area.<sup>24</sup>

According to their origin, the ryot landlords may be divided into two main groups, one stemming from the upper stratum of the old village community. That the upper crust of exploiters stems from the ryots is attested to in Madras by the findings of the sample survey conducted in 1946-47: 23 per cent of the resident landholders covered rented out their land to tenants in their own or other villages.<sup>25</sup>

Comprising the second group of ryot landlords are professional usurers, and moneylenders, traders, and representatives of different strata of urban population (mainly middle classes) who have invested money in land; they generally rent out the land purchased.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

<sup>23</sup> *The Bulletin of the Bureau of Economics and Statistics*, vol. IX, No. I, Government of Bombay, July 1955), pp. 48-49.

<sup>24</sup> M. N. Goswami, *A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang*, (Shillong, 1950), p. 16; S. C. Sharma, *A Survey of the Rural Economic Conditions in Sibsagar* (Shillong, 1952), p. 25; S. C. Sharma, *A Survey of the Rural Economic Conditions in Lakhimpur* (Shillong, 1954), p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> *Report of the Special Officer on Land Tenures in the Ryotwari Areas of the Madras Province* (Madras, 1951), p. 171.

In Bombay, between 1917 and 1943 some 5 million acres of peasant and small landlord holdings passed to absentee urban landholders or to rural moneylenders, traders and artisans. During this period 'non-agriculturist' landholders increased their total holdings 2.6-fold.<sup>26</sup> What these figures show above all is the passing of peasants' land to money-lenders and traders. According to the Land Census, in 1954-55 some 7,000 persons residing in the city of Madras had holdings in different districts in the State. True, more than half of them had holdings of five acres or less and happened to be in Madras doing seasonal work. However, the larger part of the total area of these holdings (63 per cent) belonged to proprietors possessing 20 acres or more but making up only 11 per cent of landholders in this group.<sup>27</sup> The Land Census figures show that in the ryotwari areas in Madras State, too, the land was passing to urban elements.

While most of the ryot landlords possessed a few hundred acres of land or only a few score, there were some who had very large holdings. For instance, according to the *People's Age*, a landlord in Tanjore District in Madras, K. Sambasiva Iyer, possessed 5,000 acres.<sup>28</sup>

Nominally, the ryotwari land-revenue system embraces the holdings of both ryot landlords and ryot peasants. Both pay the same rate of land revenue, but the high taxation in the ryotwari areas has proved ruinous only for ryots possessing small holdings.

Under the existing system [an official statement says] the burden of assessment falls unevenly on different classes of people. The assessment is a tax on land and not on the person paying it. A person who owns a large extent of land and enjoys considerable net surplus from the produce pays the same rate of assessment as another who has only a small holding which leaves only a small surplus:

<sup>26</sup> Statistical Atlas of Bombay State (Bombay, 1950), p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> The Census of Landholdings and Cultivation, Madras Legislature, p. 30.

<sup>28</sup> *People's Age*, 9 February 1947.

to him. Such persons of large holdings are generally well off and more so, in the years of normal or high prices.<sup>29</sup>

Ryot landlords shift the burden of the land revenue on to the backs of the tillers of the soil. In 1946-47, special enquiries conducted by government in nine selected districts of the Madras Province, revealed that the rental exceeded the land revenue assessment of individual crops 9 to 33 times.<sup>30</sup>

With most of the ryot landlords belonging to the middle or small holders, their holdings scattered, and separate holdings located in particular villages recorded as independent holdings, it is extremely difficult to determine from the statistical data what percentage of the land belongs to landlords. On the basis of a study of the different sources, the landlord holdings in the ryotwari areas between the middle forties and early fifties of this century can be estimated at roughly 50 per cent of the total land. The Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee (1949) arrived at the conclusion that during the war 'land has been further concentrated in fewer hands and there has been more and more proletarianization of the small peasants.'<sup>31</sup>

The ryotwari land revenue system covered 93 per cent of the privately-owned land in Bombay, 59 per cent in Madhya Pradesh, 73 per cent in Madras (including Andhra), more than 91 per cent in Assam, and several million acres in some other States.<sup>32</sup>

As in the ryotwari areas, in the area where the mahalwari land revenue system obtained (Punjab)<sup>33</sup>, at first it was

<sup>29</sup> Report of the Special Officer for the Investigation of Land Tenures on the Proposals on Land Revenue Reform (Madras, 1950), p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee (New Delhi, 1949), p. 137 (hereafter referred to as RCARC).

<sup>32</sup> Calculated from the sources indicated in footnote 19.

<sup>33</sup> The introduction of the mahalwari system has been treated by N. I. Semyonova, 'Zemelno-nalogovaya politika angliyskikh kolonialnikh vlastei v Pendjabe v 50-60 godakh XIX veka' (The Land-Revenue Policy of the British Colonial Authorities in the Punjab in the 50's-60's of the 19th Century), in Ucheniye zapiski Instituta vostokovedeniya (Proceedings of the Institute of Oriental Studies) vol. XVIII (Moscow, 1957). •

the full and equal members and the upper crust of the community who were endowed with the rights of private proprietors. However, as in Madras or Bombay, there too a process of dispossession of the peasantry and concentration of the land partly in the hands of the landlords and partly in the hands of the upper stratum of the peasantry continued. Actually, the mahalwari system in the Punjab today differs little from the ryotwari system. The growth of landlord and rich peasant holdings through the expropriation of small peasant holdings in the Punjab between the two world wars is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

*Percentage Distribution of Number of Holdings and Area of Land under Them by Size of Holdings in Pre-Partition Punjab*

Holding size (acres)	1924		1939		Changes in percentage distribution between 1924 and 1939	
	Number	Area	Number	Area	Number	Area
Up to 1	17.9	1.1	20.2	0.8	+2.3	-0.3
1-3	25.5	4.4	28.6	5.2	+3.1	+0.8
3-5	14.9	6.6	14.9	6.2	-	-0.4
5-10	18.4	15.1	16.9	13.1	-1.5	-2.0
10-15	8.2	11.5	7.3	9.1	-0.9	-2.4
15-20	4.3	8.4	3.6	7.2	-0.7	-1.2
20-25	2.7	6.8	2.2	5.6	-0.5	-1.2
25-50	4.8	20.4	3.9	14.8	-0.9	-5.6
Over 50	3.3	25.7	2.4	38.0	-0.9	+12.3
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00		

Sources: H. Calvert, *The Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab* (Lahore, 1939), p. 172; Famine Inquiry Commission, *Final Report*, p. 256.

Between 1924 and 1939 the area of holdings of less than 50 acres declined, such land as caused the decline going to swell the holdings of the top group (those possessing 50 acres or more). On the eve of World War II holders of up to five acres, who made up 63.7 per cent of the holders, had but 12.2 per cent of the total land and the holders of 50 acres or more, who made up only 2.4 per cent of the holders,

held 38 per cent of the total land. The figures given in the table attest to the concentration of the bulk of the cultivated land in the hands of the small group of big landholders.

In the Punjab, according to the data compiled by the local Kisan Sabha, 78 per cent of the landowners had holdings of less than 10 acres and they owned 40 per cent of the total cultivated land; 18 per cent had holdings of 10 to 50 acres and 30 per cent of the cultivated land, and 4 per cent possessed 50 acres or more, their total holdings, too, amounting to 30 per cent of the cultivated land.<sup>34</sup>

These are the chief features of the distribution of landholdings in the States, the former provinces of British India.

In 1947-48 the zamindari land-revenue system covered 57 per cent of the area of private holdings in nine States (former provinces of British India), the ryotwari system 38 per cent, and the mahalwari system 5 per cent.<sup>35</sup>

Following the policy of *divide et impera*, the British divided the country into provinces and native princely states, which in the period examined by us numbered 601.<sup>36</sup> Before the proclamation of India's independence, in these princely states, which covered 45 per cent of the country's territory (within the boundaries prior to 1947), lived 24 per cent of the total population.<sup>37</sup>

In the princely states, feudal landownership existed in three forms: state (government), the ruler's domain, and privately-owned land.<sup>38</sup>

The ratio between the three forms differed in the individual princely states. For instance, of the 2,896 villages in

<sup>34</sup> Quoted by Bhowani Sen in *Indian Land System and Land Reforms* (New Delhi, 1955), pp. 6-7.

<sup>35</sup> S. T. Thirumalai, *Postwar Agricultural Problems and Policies in India* (Bombay, 1954), p. 129.

<sup>36</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (London, 1947), p. 257.

<sup>37</sup> *White Paper on Indian States* (Delhi, 1950), p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> As the rulers were supreme owners of the land in their princely states, the difference between the first two categories was all but obliterated.

Baroda, 2,483 were state-owned,<sup>39</sup> in Travancore, some 75 per cent of the cultivated land was estimated to be state-owned, and in Cochin, roughly 50 per cent.<sup>40</sup> In the princely state of Mysore, too, the bulk of the land belonged to the ruler. In Hyderabad, the largest princely state in India, state-owned land (diwani) came to 59.2 per cent; the ruler's domain (sarf-i-khas) 9.8 per cent, and private feudal holdings (jagirs) 31 per cent of the total land.<sup>41</sup> In the princely state of Bhopal, jagirdars held some 30 per cent of the land,<sup>42</sup> and in the States of Madhya Bharat and Rajasthan, formed following the partition of India, 18 and 62 per cent respectively.<sup>43</sup> In Saurashtra and Vindhya Pradesh, which, like Madhya Bharat and Rajasthan, were formed by the merger of several princely states, private feudal holdings were respectively 38 and 40 per cent of the cultivated land.<sup>44</sup>

In the smaller princely states many feudal landlords, who comprised the feudalized upper crust of the village community, had small holdings. In Saurashtra, for instance, which had 4,415 villages and towns, the feudal landlord class consisted of 222 families of the kin of former rulers and 51,700 families of private feudal landholders, and for every landlord family there were on the average 10-12 tenant families.<sup>45</sup>

However, among the feudal landowners there were some who were real land magnates. In Hyderabad, for example,

<sup>39</sup> *Rural Baroda, A Monograph Drawn up by the Government of Baroda* (Bombay, 1949), p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> S. Parameswaran, *The Peasant Question in Kerala* (Bombay, 1951), p. 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Report of the Agrarian Reforms Committee* (Hyderabad, 1949), pp. 2, 8.

<sup>42</sup> *Agricultural Situation in India* (hereafter referred to as ASI), vol. VII, No. 3 (June 1952), p. 140.

<sup>43</sup> *Report of the Rajasthan-Madhya Bharat Jagir Enquiry Committee* (Delhi, 1950), pp. 28, 30, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Government of Saurashtra, *A Memorandum on Land Reforms in Saurashtra* (1954), pp. 17, 23; H. D. Malaviya, *op. cit.*, pp. 362, 364.

<sup>45</sup> *A Memorandum on Land Reforms in Saurashtra*, p. 2. The Indian press cited the case of a village in Rajasthan, where 200 of the village's 700 families belonged to the feudal stratum of jagirdars (*Cross Roads*, 2 August 1953).

the three biggest feudal families held some 1,200 villages between them.<sup>46</sup>

Private feudal landowners, who, like the zamindars, made up numerous groups each with its own legal status (five groups in Hyderabad, eight in Rajasthan, nine in Madhya Bharat, ten in Saurashtra, etc.), either paid the rulers, as supreme proprietors of the land, a small land revenue, or were exempt from paying this revenue.<sup>47</sup>

In the princely states, the bigger feudals had their own revenue administration offices and their own police.

In Kashmir, two feudal estates, Poonch and Chenani covered a territory with a population of over 240,000.<sup>48</sup>

On the big feudals' estates there was generally a stratum of different feudal rent-receivers acting as intermediaries between the landowner and the peasants. In Hyderabad, for instance, sub-jagirdars held 376 villages.<sup>49</sup>

The system of land revenue obtaining on state lands and in the big and economically more developed princely states was built on the ryotwari principle. Tenants of government land possessed the right of completely alienating their holdings, and in connection with the development of commodity-money relations a fairly substantial percentage of the land gradually passed into the hands of landlords and the upper stratum of the peasantry. This process is illustrated, in particular, by the data for Mysore, where in 1944-45 some one per cent of the ryots held 16 per cent of the total land.<sup>50</sup> Against the mass of small holdings the big holdings stood out sharply. In Hyderabad, for instance, according to the data given in the 1929-30 inquiry, of 4,000

<sup>46</sup> A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition and Land Reforms in Hyderabad* (Hyderabad, 1953), p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> The biggest among them enjoyed vast incomes through the feudal exploitation of the peasantry. Thus in Hyderabad 12 feudal jagirdars had incomes which totalled Rs 15.2 million.

<sup>48</sup> P. N. Kaul, 'Land Reforms in Jammu and Kashmir State', *Indian Journal of Economics*, No. 147, vol. XXXVII, Part 4 (April, 1957), p. 380.

<sup>49</sup> A. M. Khusro, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Report of the Committee for the Revision of the Land-Revenue System in Mysore (Bangalore, 1950), pp. 276-77.

ryots in the villages surveyed 71 possessed 100 acres each, and one over 1,500.<sup>51</sup> Of the 746,000 holders of government land in Travancore, 650,000 had holdings of five acres or less, and 2,370 over 50 acres.<sup>52</sup>

As was the case in the ryotwari areas, a good part of the land passed into the hands of usurers and traders. By the close of the thirties of the present century, according to some data, approximately one-third of the land in the possession of occupants of state land in Hyderabad had passed to them.<sup>53</sup> In Cochin, between 1942 ant 1946, 80 per cent of the land sold passed into the hands of people who came from urban strata of the population.<sup>54</sup>

In the princely state of Baroda, the holders of state land (khatedars) who rented out land made up some 18 per cent of all khatedars in 1907-08, and 24 per cent in 1939-40, and the percentage of the land they held went up during that period from 21 to 28.<sup>55</sup> In Mysore, according to the first Agricultural Labour Enquiry in 1951, 14.7 per cent of the land was cultivated by tenants.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the same processes continued on government lands in the Indian states as in the ryotwari areas in the provinces of British India: the holdings of ryot peasants gradually passing into the hands of the growing group of landlord-type landholders, largely coming from the trader and usurer strata.

In 1947, on the partition of India into Pakistan and the Union of India, 555 princely states became constituent parts of the latter, in addition to the bulk of the territory of the

<sup>51</sup> S. K. Iyengar, *Economic Investigations in the Hyderabad State, 1929-1930*, vol. I (Hyderabad, 1931), p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Report of the Land Policy Committee (Travancore-Cochin) (Trivandrum, 1950), p. 103.

<sup>53</sup> A. I. Qureshi, *The Economic Development of Hyderabad: Rural Economy* (Madras, 1947), p. 133.

<sup>54</sup> Report of the Agrarian Problem Enquiry Committee (Ernakulam, 1949), p. 140.

<sup>55</sup> *Rural Baroda*, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Agricultural Labour Enquiry. *Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure* (Delhi, 1954), p. 249 (hereafter referred to as RMPOS).

former British India. Later, 216 princely states were merged with neighbouring states, and the rest became separate constituent states of the Union of India, for instance, Hyderabad, Mysore, Bhopal, Tripura, Manipur, etc. or states comprised of unions of princely states as Madhya Bharat, Vindhya Pradesh, Travancore-Cochin, Pepsu and Rajasthan.

Following the administrative reorganization of the princely states, the different forms of private feudal landholding were all regarded as zamindari-type landlord property and were covered by legislation providing for the abolition of the zamindari system.

The rulers' domains were either included in the ryotwari areas (as, for instance, in Hyderabad in 1949) or were secured by law, all or in part, to their owners. As stated in the India government's official publication: 'Rulers (of princely states), who were interested in farming or horticulture, have been allowed to retain reasonable areas of land already in their possession.'<sup>57</sup> What it meant in practice can be seen from the following: in Pepsu state the former Ruler of Faridkot kept more than 15,000 acres.<sup>58</sup> The domains of small rulers which became constituent parts of neighbouring states or unions of states, were sometimes regarded as zamindari-type holdings (as in Saurashtra, for instance).

Government land in the former princely states became part of the ryotwari areas, and their holders thereby obtained the legal status of ryot landholders in the States formerly the provinces of British India. For occupants of government land in the bigger princely states (Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore-Cochin, etc.) the changes were nominally of a legal nature. However, in the smaller princely states where there were no land records and rent-tax was raised in purely medieval ways, the condition of tenants on government land improved considerably. In Saurashtra, for instance, since the introduction of a unified survey and settlement and conversion of the crop share system into a cash assessment system, the ryots have been paying land revenue one-third

<sup>57</sup> White Paper on Indian States, p. 64.

<sup>58</sup> Report on Agrarian Reforms in Pepsu (June 1952), p. 17.

to one-fifth of the former.<sup>59</sup> However, the rulers have been generously compensated for the loss of their rights.

They were left all their palaces and the adscriptive land and other wealth. In addition, they were granted privy purses totalling 56.5 million rupees annually, payable from government funds.<sup>60</sup> Most of the bigger rulers occupied the office of Rajpramukh (governor) of the states.<sup>61</sup>

The reorganization of the princely states and their inclusion as constituents in the States of the Republic were thus in a way the first stage of implementation of the agrarian reforms in those states, a stage in which from the very start there was revealed a clear tendency to preserve the landlords as a class (securing to the rulers a portion of their land) while paying them for the alienated land (granting the rulers privy purses).

These were the main forms of feudal landownership in India before the agrarian reforms. It is very difficult to determine exactly the percentage of land owned by the landlords; so all that can be done is to make a rough estimate. Assuming that the feudal holdings in the ryotwari areas and in the Punjab were 30-40 per cent and taking into consideration the fact that a small portion of the land in the zamindari areas was held by zamindar-peasants, we have come to the conclusion that in 1947-48 landlords' land in the country's nine biggest States were roughly 60-70 per cent of the total private holdings. Sir Manilal B. Nanavati, a prominent Indian economist, estimated that on the eve of Indian independence landlords in the provinces of the former British India owned some 70 per cent of the total cultivated land.<sup>62</sup> Undoubtedly, however, after the merger of the princely states with the provinces of the former British India the percentage of landlords' land declined somewhat,

<sup>59</sup> *A Memorandum on Land Reforms in Saurashtra*, p. 32. Before that, the land revenue from 1.4 million acres of government land was collected in kind.

<sup>60</sup> *White Paper on Indian States*, pp. 388-95.

<sup>61</sup> The institution of Rajpramukhs was abolished following India's new political-administrative reorganization on a linguistic basis in 1956.

<sup>62</sup> *The Famine Inquiry Commission. Final Report*, p. 374.

since, first, the bulk of the land in the former princely states became an integral part of the ryotwari areas and, second, concentration of government land in the princely states in the hands of the landlords was, undoubtedly, less than in the ryotwari areas in British India. To all appearance, in the country as a whole, the landlords owned approximately 55-60 per cent of the total privately-owned land. As for rent-receivers, according to the 1951 census, they made up less than 2 per cent of the total agricultural population.<sup>63</sup>

Hence, peasant proprietors, who, according to the first Agricultural Labour Enquiry, made up some 29 per cent of the total agricultural population in 1951, held 40-45 per cent of the land, while landless tenants and labourers made up 71 per cent of the total agricultural population.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, before implementation of the land reforms, roughly two-thirds of all the land in India belonged to landlords and some three-quarters of the peasants were landless tenants or agricultural labourers. The chief outcome of the colonialist agrarian policy in India was the impoverishment and dispossession of the peasantry and the strengthening of the dominant position of the class of semi-feudal landlords, who had concentrated in their hands the biggest and best part of the cultivated land.

### *Landless and Land-Poor Peasants*

The concentration of land in India was not followed by concentration of agricultural production. The small or tiny farm of the peasant proprietor or tenant remained the principal production unit in the country's agriculture as shown in Table 4 (see p. 20).

The overwhelming majority of peasant proprietors held parcels of land which, with farming techniques extremely backward, were not big enough to provide a minimum

<sup>63</sup> According to the 1951 Census, rent-receivers, including members of their families, numbered 5.3 million. It should be borne in mind, however, that partly included in this category were some groups of the upper stratum of the peasantry.

<sup>64</sup> RMPOS, p. 630.

TABLE 4  
Percentage Distribution of Small-sized Cultivators' Holdings in Different States (1951)

State	Size of holding (acres)	Number	Area
Uttar Pradesh	up to 5	67.00	26.40
Punjab	" " 10	49.59	20.68
Pepsu	" " 10	38.60	12.80
Rajasthan	" " 10	47.16	12.81
Bombay	" " 10	68.78	25.67
Madhya Bharat	" " 10	54.90	20.40
Madhya Pradesh	" " 10	59.00	17.90
Hyderabad	" " 5	56.00	15.40
Bihar	" " 5	77.00	31.90
West Bengal	" " 5	66.60	31.60
Assam	" " 5	61.88	32.48
Orissa	" " 5	71.47	24.91
Mysore	" " 5	54.50	19.90
Madras	" " 5	74.45	30.46
Travancore-Cochin	" " 5	88.00	42.50
	" " 5	59.00	15.50
All-India	" " 10	78.10	33.10

Source: *RMPOS*, pp. 522-3.

subsistence and normal reproduction. According to data compiled by the Research Section of the Tamilnad Congress Committee, 78 per cent of the private landowners in the ryotwari areas in Madras had holdings ranging up to three acres in 1951.<sup>65</sup> According to an inquiry conducted by the State Kisan Sabha in the Punjab, where 10 acres is the minimum size for an 'economic holding', 78 per cent of all landowners had holdings under that figure.<sup>66</sup>

With land selling at a high price and its concentration in the hands of landlords and the richer peasants, poor peasants could expand their husbandry only by renting out land. Hence the large number of semi-tenants in Indian villages. A sample survey conducted in Madras in 1947 showed 25 per cent of the ryots as semi-tenants and the land rented by them made up 50 per cent of their total cultivated areas.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> H. D. Malaviya, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

<sup>66</sup> Bhowani Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Report of the Special Officer on Land Tenures, p. 170.

In former Pepsu, roughly two-thirds of the total area held by tenants-at-will was cultivated by those who were semi-tenants.<sup>68</sup>

Tenancies are most widespread in districts where landlord holdings predominate, as renting out land under the semi-feudal tenancy system was the chief form of exploitation of the peasantry by the landlords. That is why in the ryotwari areas, too, tenancy predominates over landlord holdings.

For example, according to the late K. G. Sivaswamy, who conducted a special survey of tenant and landlord relationships in Madras Province, of the total number of agriculturists on the irrigated lands, which, as has been stated earlier, was concentrated in the hands of the landlords, 75 per cent were tenants.<sup>69</sup>

It should be stated that the percentage of landlords' share in the total land under cultivation is greater than the percentage of land rented out, as a portion of such land is cultivated by hired labour. Table 5 shows that tenancies are not diffused equally throughout India.

TABLE 5  
*Percentage of the Area Taken on Lease to the Total Land in Cultivators' Holdings (1951)*

<i>States in which ryotwari system predominated</i>	<i>Area taken on lease</i>	<i>States in which zamindari system predominated</i>	<i>Area taken on lease</i>
Punjab	30.7	Travancore-Cochin	35.0
Pepsu	20.1		
Assam	20.7	Uttar Pradesh	78.6
Madhya Bharat	31.4	Bihar	89.1
Bombay	26.8	West Bengal	77.6
Mysore	14.7	Madhya Pradesh	70.5
Hyderabad	15.7	Rajasthan	57.3
Madras	21.0		
<b>All-India</b>			<b>43.2</b>

Source: *RMPOS*, p. 521.

<sup>68</sup> Report on Agrarian Reforms in Pepsu, p. 22.

<sup>69</sup> K. G. Sivaswami, *Madras Ryotwari Tenant* (Madras, 1948), part I, p. 6.

In the States in which the zamindari land-revenue system has predominated, the largest percentage of owned cultivated area, according to the 1951 survey, was in the States of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. The ryotwari land-revenue system obtained on a good part of government land in the former princely states of Rajputana, which were merged into the State of Rajasthan.

The relatively low percentage of leased area in the states in which the ryotwari system of land revenue predominates agrees with the data indicating that in the ryotwari areas roughly half of the land belonged to peasants. However, in these areas, too, 60-70 per cent of the peasants constituted a class of poor peasants.

The owners and tenants of tiny holdings, who make up the bulk of the Indian peasantry, go on reproducing because the small peasants who 'are masters of the art of maintaining their hold by reducing consumption to an unbelievable minimum.'<sup>70</sup> They make up the major concealed form of India's relative agrarian overpopulation.

### Semi-Feudal Exploitation and Impoverishment

Under the semi-feudal monopoly and the predominance of small operational units in agriculture, the semi-feudal tenancy was the principal form in which the landlords exploited the peasantry.

Forms of economy inherited from feudalism have persisted in India in the shape of petty peasant tenancies. It is not capital but the landlord's property in the land that is at the base of the exploitation of the tenant. The rent collected by the landlord from the peasant is not confined to the portion of the surplus value which remains after deduction of the owner's profits, but embraces the whole surplus product, and sometimes even a part of the necessary product. The rent paid by tenants is of a feudal and not of a capitalist nature. This is shown, in particular, by the high

<sup>70</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Capitalism in Agriculture* (Moscow, 1960), p. 134.

rent paid by the vast majority of tenants.<sup>71</sup> In the thirties and forties of the present century it averaged 40-60 per cent of the crop in kind for India as a whole, but sometimes it was as high as 80 per cent of the crop. The rent level was determined by the land monopoly of the semi-feudal landlords and the relative agrarian overpopulation.

Pre-capitalist land rent persisted in India in two forms: in kind and in cash. Labour rent has been found mainly in some districts of North and Central India. There, too, however, it played only a secondary role compared with rent in kind and cash. Labour rent ordinarily appeared in the shape of compulsory labour (*veth, begar*), which, in particular, heightened the feudal exploitation of tenants from among the untouchables.

In medieval India, the feudals did not practically manage their economies and rent in kind predominated. So the practice of labour rent is to be rarely found in India.

Throughout the first half of the 20th century a rise in the scale of rents could be observed, which showed an increasing rate of semi-feudal exploitation of the Indian peasantry under imperialism. To illustrate, in the inter-war-years the average rent paid by sharecroppers in Madras Province equalled one-half to two-thirds of the crop. Since the World War II it has gone up from two-thirds to three quarters of the crop.<sup>72</sup>

Cash rents paid by tenants too have increased. In Orissa, for example, between 1947 and 1952 the average rates of cash rent went up by 25 per cent.<sup>73</sup> In Bihar, the total rent received by zamindars went up roughly 40 per cent between 1942 and 1949.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> In his works on the agrarian question, Lenin emphasized the connection between the high rent and its historical pattern [see, for instance, 'The Agrarian Programme of the Russian Social Democracy,' *Collected Works* (Moscow, 1901), vol. VI, p. 143].

<sup>72</sup> *Report on Land Policy, Agricultural Labour and Insurance* (Delhi, 1948), p. iii; RCARC, p. 38.

<sup>73</sup> G. Patnaik, 'Impoverishment of the Oriya Peasant,' *New Age*, vol. II, No. 2 (November 1953), p. 35.

<sup>74</sup> *Bihar Statistical Handbook*, p. 130.

Moreover, the rise in the rates of rent has considerably outstripped the rise of prices of farm produce. Thus, in Tanjore District (Madras) prices of agricultural produce rose by 30 per cent between 1900 and 1916, and rates of rent by 90 per cent; in the Tiruchirapalli District prices doubled between 1900 and 1926 while rent tripled.<sup>75</sup> In the present Uttar Pradesh prices went up 6 per cent between 1901 and 1933, and rates of rent 45 per cent,<sup>76</sup> and in the Punjab, by the beginning of the thirties prices had gone up 50 per cent and average cash rent 200 per cent.<sup>77</sup>

The semi-feudal exploitation of tenants was not confined to collection of rent by landlords. Other forms of exploitation were various feudal levies by the landlords on the peasants in kind or in cash, and compulsory labour. In some districts of the present Uttar Pradesh, there were as many as 50 of these exactions,<sup>78</sup> increasing considerably the scale of the rent. Especially onerous was the obligation to pay the landholder a bonus on signing or renewing a tenancy (*nazarana*); it sometimes amounted to a year's or two year's rent.

The feudal exactions (abwabs) were realized especially strictly in the princely states. In Saurashtra the exactions on private landlords' and state land numbered 91.<sup>79</sup> In the Nilgiri State in Orissa, before World War II peasants were obliged to take part in tiger and elephant hunts, work on construction projects, clear woods, carry fuel, serve as carriers, and so on.<sup>80</sup> The system of farming out the collection of rent and taxes, widely practised in some of the smaller states, intensified the semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>75</sup> K. G. Sivaswami, *op. cit.*, part I, p. 6.

<sup>76</sup> R. K. Mukerjee (Ed.), *Economic Problems of Modern India*, vol. I (London, 1939), p. 225.

<sup>77</sup> H. Calvert, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

<sup>78</sup> RUPZAC, vol. I, p. 354.

<sup>79</sup> *A Memorandum on Land Reforms in Saurashtra*, p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> *Report of the Orissa State Enquiry Committee* (Cuttack, 1939), p. 94.

<sup>81</sup> Eighty per cent of the villages in the domain of the Raja of Jeypore (Orissa) were farmed out [*Report of the Partially Excluded Areas Enquiry Committee* (Cuttack, 1940), p. 17].

The exactions by landlords show that elements of personal dependence of peasants on feudal landlords have persisted in India to a fairly substantial degree right up to very recent times.

While most of the feudal duties were not formally recognized by the law, the landlords and their agents forced the peasants to discharge them, employing the most cruel means for the purpose. These are confirmed by the facts given in the *Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee (1947)*:

In some ilaqas illegal exactions amounted to as many as 50 in number. Ingenious as some of these exactions were, the methods of realizing them were even more ingenious. There were cases when fields sown by the tenants were ploughed up again and the crop destroyed, and crops ready for reaping were either forcibly taken away by the zamindar's men or burnt down. The tenant was sometimes made to stand in the sun with a stick between his legs. It is unnecessary to multiply these sadistic stories.<sup>82</sup>

The semi-feudal exploitation ruined not only the farms of the mass of peasant tenants; it also bankrupted the prosperous upper crust who had come up from the mass. Soviet economist V. G. Rastyannikov showed in his papers on agrarian relations in the Punjab how landlord landownership and the system of semi-feudal exploitation has impeded the development of peasant farms and the emergence of a well-to-do upper crust.<sup>83</sup>

It should be noted that other conditions being equal, capitalist land rent from a given plot should be relatively less than pre-capitalist.

In this connection the point brought out by Dr. V. V.

<sup>82</sup> RUPZAC, vol. I, p. 354.

<sup>83</sup> See: V. G. Rastyannikov, 'O formakh feodalnoi ekspluatatsii krestyanstva v kolonialnom Pendzhabe' (On the Forms of Feudal Exploitation of the Peasantry in the Colonial Punjab), in *Kratkiye Soobshcheniya Instituta Vostokovedeniya* (Short Reports of the Institute of Oriental Studies), XXI (Moscow, 1956); 'O kharaktere tovarnosti zernovogo khozyaistva v Pendzhabe' (On the Nature of the Market Supplies of Grain-Growing in the Punjab), *idem*, XXIII, (Moscow, 1957).

Sayana that big and wealthy tenants paid less than the rent paid by poor tenants is highly significant.

In reality, however, it was hard to distinguish between capitalist and pre-capitalist rent in the rental paid by the rich peasant and without a thorough inquiry it was simply impossible. What made it more complicated is that in rent paid in kind not only pre-capitalist rent appeared but in a concealed way also capitalist rent. The landlords managed to exact also a part of the owner's profit, which hampered the development of agricultural capitalism. Under these conditions, 'if any profit actually arises along with this rent, this profit is not a barrier of rent, but the rent is rather a barrier of this profit.<sup>84</sup>' That is why in the struggle against semi-feudal landholding the rich peasantry joined with the rest of the peasantry.

Besides the exploitation by landlords there was the plundering by traders and moneylenders. According to the All-India Rural Credit Survey conducted by the Reserve Bank of India in 1951-52, moneylenders' capital accounted for 75.7 per cent of total agricultural credits.<sup>85</sup> According to the estimate of the National Income Committee, interest collected by moneylenders in those years amounted to Rs. 865 million (at the rate of 9.5 per cent per annum).<sup>86</sup> However, the data of the different surveys show that moneylenders' average rates of interest ranged between 12 and 24 per cent per annum, and where the loans were in kind, 50 to 100 per cent and more.

The poorer peasants were the main object of exploitation by the moneylenders. According to a survey conducted in 1945 in Uttar Pradesh, the percentage of families in debt was lowest among the upper groups, and the lower the category the higher the percentage.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Marx, *Capital*, (Chicago, 1909), vol. III, p. 927.

<sup>85</sup> All-India Rural Credit Survey. *Report of the Committee of Direction*, vol. II, *General Report* (Bombay, 1954), p. 167 (hereafter referred to as AIRCS).

<sup>86</sup> *First Report of the National Income Committee* (Delhi, 1951), p. 86.

<sup>87</sup> RCARC, p. 91.

The reason for the Indian peasantry's shackling indebtedness to moneylenders was their poverty due to the long colonial and semi-feudal exploitation. It is indicative that in 1951-52 the lowest group used up 60 per cent of the loan they obtained for consumption outlays while households in the highest category used only 37 per cent for this purpose.<sup>88</sup> Exploitation of the peasantry by traders usually was coupled with usury. For, firstly, village moneylenders, the lowest stratum in the chain of middlemen between producers and consumers were, as a rule, at the same time buyers of agricultural produce. Secondly, traders carried on their usurious operations directly when buying farm produce from the peasants. According to the data of government surveys conducted just before and during the first years of World War II the proportion of traders' and moneylenders' capital in the price paid by consumers of agricultural products ranged between 25 and 60 per cent.<sup>89</sup> Dr. Surendra J. Patel estimated that in 1950-51 land rent and moneylenders' interest came up to the staggering amount of Rs. 14,000 million, or roughly a third of the value of the country's total farm produce that year.<sup>90</sup> All of which led to the pauperization of India's peasantry and the degradation of her agriculture, a major indication of which was the drop in the yield of the principal crops. Thus, by 1950 the yield of rice had fallen 25 per cent on the average compared to 1936-38, of maize 22 per cent and of wheat 5 per cent.<sup>91</sup> There was seen a decline also in the yield of commercial crops: jute from 1,195 pounds per acre in 1936-37 to 910 in 1950, tobacco from 487 to 660, groundnuts from 874 to 714, and so on.<sup>92</sup>

The plundering of the chief element of the productive

<sup>88</sup> AIRCS, vol. II, p. 234.

<sup>89</sup> P. Malhotra, *Stabilization of Agricultural Prices in India* (Delhi, 1948), p. 47; RCARC, p. 107.

<sup>90</sup> Surendra J. Patel, 'The Distribution of the National Income of India,' *The Indian Economic Review*, vol. III, No. 1 (1956), p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Year-Book of Food and Agricultural Statistics, 1951, vol. V, part I (Rome, 1952).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

forces in agriculture, namely, the producer, led to chronic mass malnutrition, and in years of crop-failure to starvation with a high mortality rate. The famine of 1943-44 took six million human lives.

In the first five years of independence, production of food-stuffs continued approximately at the prewar level, which in view of the increase in population and their requirements further aggravated the food problem. The acute food shortage remained, as in colonial days, one of the most serious internal problems. Between 1948 and 1953 famine visited many areas year after year. According to the former Union Minister of Agriculture Dr. Punjab Rao Deshmukh, as late as the spring of 1953 famine gripped areas with a population of 26 million.<sup>93</sup> The food problem became a serious drag on the further development of the national economy. To cope with the food shortage, India had to import between 1946 and 1953, 14 million tons of grain worth Rs. 10,000 million.<sup>94</sup> Such a large import of foodstuffs, besides becoming a heavy burden on the country's economy (compare it with capital investments under the Five Year Plan of 1951-56 which totalled Rs. 20,000 million), had a detrimental effect on her balance of trade and payments. This was widely utilised by foreign monopoly capital, primarily American, to strengthen their economic and political positions in India.

Neither was the other branch of agriculture—animal husbandry—in a better condition.

The slaughter of livestock for food is extremely rare because of the people's prejudices. The vast and steady increase in the head of livestock under conditions of backward agriculture has created an acute fodder problem. While in 1945 there were 114 heads of cattle per 250 acres of farm area (plus fallows), in 1951 there were 151.<sup>95</sup> At the same time, according to experts, some 30 per cent of the

<sup>93</sup> *Eastern Economist*, vol. XX, No. 22 (29 May 1953), p. 877.

<sup>94</sup> *India, 1958: A Reference Annual* (Delhi, 1958), p. 261.

<sup>95</sup> Calculated from data contained in *Indian Livestock Census, 1951, vol. I, Summary Tables* (Delhi, 1955).

cattle was useless, as it was not used in agricultural production.<sup>96</sup>

The principal livestock product in India is milk and dairy produce. The total value of it in 1950-51 was Rs. 6,200 million, compared with Rs. 800 million for meat products.<sup>97</sup> Yet the milk yield in India is one of the lowest in the world. In 1951 it was 190 kilograms a year per cow.<sup>98</sup>

The poor countryside in India could not serve as a broad market for developing industry. Sample surveys conducted in 1949-51 by the Indian Statistical Institute showed that on the average rural families spent 65-66 per cent of their consumption funds on food, and what is more, 50 per cent of the food did not come from the market. The remnants of the natural economy, too, in particular, where rent in kind predominated, restricted the home market.<sup>99</sup> The absolute standard of consumption can be seen from the fact that among most families it equalled two to three rupees a day in terms of money.<sup>100</sup>

Even lower was the level of productive consumption by the peasantry. According to the same survey, average capital investments for expanding agricultural production amounted to Rs. 28 per rural family.<sup>101</sup>

The medieval standard of farming technique too limited the possibility of expanding the home market. As late as 1951 the country had only 931,000 iron poluchs against

<sup>96</sup> Mohan Lal Saksena, 'Animal Husbandry Programmes under the Second Plan,' *AICC Economic Review*, vol. VIII, No. 14 (15 November 1956), p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> *Final Report of the National Income Committee* (Delhi, 1954), p. 51.

<sup>98</sup> *Year-Book of Food and Agricultural Statistics*, 1953, vol. VII, Part 1 (Rome, 1954), p. 167.

<sup>99</sup> A tenant who paid as rent in kind not only all of the surplus product but also a part of the necessary product, had little to do with the market. At the same time, on the eve of World War II in most districts of Northern India from 20 to 40 per cent of the cultivated areas were rented out on a crop-sharing basis (M. V. Nana-vati and J. J. Anjaria, *The Indian Rural Problem* (Bombay, 1947), p. 159.

<sup>100</sup> *National Sample Survey*, No. 2 (Tables with Notes on the Second Round, April-June 1951) (Delhi, 1953), pp. 6-8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

31,780,000 wooden.<sup>102</sup> The impoverished peasant was not much of a buyer of industrial goods. It is indicative that a fairly large part of the extremely limited stocks of artificial fertilizers produced in India or imported remained unsold. In 1950, for instance, only 70 per cent of the total stocks of ammonium sulphate was consumed, and in 1952 only 57 per cent. The corresponding figures for superphosphates were 67 per cent in 1951 and 74 per cent in 1952.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, the long colonial exploitation of the country by British imperialism and the predominance of semi-feudal production relations in agriculture limited the possibilities of expanding the home market and consequently delayed further capitalist development. Nevertheless, the process of capitalist development in agriculture did proceed with commercial agriculture as the basis.

### *Commercialization of Agriculture and Development of Capitalism in the Countryside*

Britain's agrarian policy was designed to keep semi-feudal production relations in the Indian countryside. However, the transformation of India into an agrarian and raw-material appendage of Britain stimulated the development of commodity-money relations in the Indian village and the growth of commercial agriculture.

It was precisely the export requirements that primarily determined the changes in the structure of agricultural production which took place in the latter half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. At the same time, with the development of industry, which operated chiefly with local raw material, namely, the cotton, jute, sugar, soap and other industries, the changes in the structure of agricultural production began to be determined more and more by capitalist development in the country.

In the course of the last 50 years the proportion of industrial and export crops rose considerably, and specializa-

<sup>102</sup> *Indian Livestock Census, 1951, vol. I, p. XVIII.*

<sup>103</sup> *ASI, vol. VIII, No. 8 (November 1953), pp. 599, 601.*

tion of individual regions in the chief commodity crops kept increasing all the time. In Bengal, for instance, it was jute, in Assam tea, in the interior districts of Madras, Deccan, Central India, Berar and the Punjab it was cotton, and on the Malabar and Coromandel coasts it was the coconut palm.

Some regions became monoculture areas: jute, sugarcane, coconut or groundnut, and the development of specialization of agricultural production in individual regions gave rise to increased marketing of food crops which earlier had been grown mainly for direct consumption. Already in the mid-thirties of this century wheat grown for the market made up 55 per cent of gross harvest.<sup>104</sup>

Concomitant with the growth of commercial agriculture was the stratification of the peasantry according to property owned and the emergence from among them of a small stratum of well-to-do peasants on the one hand, and a mass of agricultural labourers on the other.

A large part of the arable land is concentrated in the hands of the small upper crust of the peasantry and the bulk of the peasant families are bankrupt. The evolution of this inequality can be traced from the data in the Report of the All-India Rural Credit Survey, 1951-52, given in Table 6.

TABLE 6  
*Distribution of Land Among the Different Groups of Households*

Farms	Average size of farms, in acres	Percentage of total farms	Percentage of area held
Big	26	10	30
Large	16.9	20	28
Medium	6.8	40	30
Small	3	30	12

Source: AIRCS, vol. II, p. 22.

In 1951, during the first Agricultural Labour Enquiry 104,000 farms were surveyed, which showed that holdings

<sup>104</sup> Report on the Marketing of Wheat in India (Delhi, 1957), p. 53.

of five acres and less made up 59.1 per cent of the total and comprised 15.5 per cent of the land, and holdings of over 25 acres made up 5.6 per cent and comprised 34.4 per cent of the land.<sup>105</sup>

These data on the distribution of the land among the different groups of farms reflect the profound process of property and class differentiation which has gone deep among the Indian peasantry. In this process 60-70 per cent of the peasantry form the poor stratum. The small stratum of rich peasants which has emerged at the other extreme has concentrated in their hands 25 to 40 per cent of the arable land possessed by the peasant households.

Along with the increasing inequality of property, contradictions have grown within the peasant class, which is breaking up into new social groups.

Undoubtedly [Lenin stated] the emergence of property inequality is the starting-point of the whole process, but the process is not at all confined to property 'differentiation'..... The old peasantry is not only 'differentiating', it is being completely dissolved, it is ceasing to exist, it is being ousted by absolutely new types of rural inhabitants —types that are the basis of a society, in which commodity economy and capitalist production prevail. These types are the rural bourgeoisie (chiefly petty bourgeoisie) and the rural proletariat—a class of commodity producers in agriculture and a class of agricultural wage-workers.<sup>106</sup>

An analysis of the data contained in the census of population and the sample survey of 104,000 families in 812 villages conducted in 1951-52 by the Ministry of Labour showed that agricultural labourers and members of their families comprised 13 per cent of total agricultural population in 1891 and 36 per cent in 1951.<sup>107</sup> The survey showed that farm labourers and members of their families living in

<sup>105</sup> Agricultural Labour Enquiry. *Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour*, vol. I (Delhi, 1955), Appendix VII (hereafter referred to as RISAL).

<sup>106</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Development of Capitalism in Russia', *Collected Works*, vol. 3 (Moscow, 1960), p. 174.

<sup>107</sup> Surendra J. Patel, *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan* (Bombay, 1952), p. 14; RISAL, pp. 19, 22.

villages numbered 82.7 million, of whom 47.5 million were working.<sup>108</sup>

The process under which the bulk of poor peasants are becoming farm labourers has assumed particularly poignant forms, which Lenin called 'non-proletarian impoverishment'. The vast stratum of the poor, comprising the majority of the peasantry, who have not finally become agricultural labourers of the capitalist type, 'eternally eke out,' to quote Lenin, 'an almost proletarian existence.'<sup>109</sup>

That is why one of the major features of the structure of India's agricultural proletariat, a feature arising from the nature of the disintegration of the peasantry, is that a substantial part of this group of rural population is made up of agricultural labourers with land. According to the 1951 Survey, 50 per cent of the agricultural labourers were tenants or proprietors of small strips of land.<sup>110</sup>

The formation of the class of wage labourers in agriculture is only one facet of the disintegration of the peasantry. Going on along with that process is the emergence of petty capitalist entrepreneurs. Production for the market has become the chief objective of the wealthy upper stratum of the peasantry in operating their farms. According to one survey, in the middle thirties the following picture was observed in the United Provinces.<sup>111</sup>

Size of farm (in acres)	5	5 to 15	over 15
Wheat sold (per cent of crop)	40	50	75

A similar picture obtained in the same period in the neighbouring Punjab. There among the wealthier households possessing over 20 acres in Lyallpur District the marketable grain amounted to 66 per cent of the gross crop.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>108</sup> *RISAL*, pp. 19, 22. Included in this stratum, in addition to agricultural labourers proper, is a considerable part of the pauperized agricultural population.

<sup>110</sup> Lenin, 'Development of Capitalism in Russia', *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>110</sup> *RISAL*, p. 20.

<sup>111</sup> *Report on the Marketing of Wheat in India*, p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> V. G. Rastyannikov, 'O kharaktere tovarnosti zernovogo khozyaistva v Pendzhabe' (On the Nature of the Market-Supplies

The well-to-do peasants who produce for the market are also the main employers of wage labour in agriculture.<sup>113</sup> Of special interest in this connection are the data collected in the sample survey of farms conducted in 1951-52 by the Reserve Bank of India. This was partly done by two economists, S. Bhattacharya and Chitta Mitra (Table 7).

TABLE 7  
*Percentage of Families Having Gross Produce Equal to Rs. 2,000 and above*

<i>State</i>	<i>No. of house-holds</i>	<i>Land cul-tivated by them</i>	<i>Gross-value of produce</i>	<i>Marketed portion of produce</i>	<i>Outlay for hired labour</i>
West Bengal	7.3	20.4	28	52.6	39.5
Bihar	4.7	31.5	34	32.4	40.1
Madras	12.5	34.7	58	57.4	42.9

Source: S. Bhattacharya and Chitta Mitra, 'The Role and Importance of the Use of Hired Labour in Farm Operations in India', *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. VII, No. 1 (January-March, 1957).

The data contained in the table indisputably show that already a rich upper stratum had emerged among the Indian peasantry which concentrated in its hands a considerable portion of the cultivated land, held the bulk of the marketable produce and, above all, was the chief employer of hired labour. As the data in the table show, this process took place in the ryotwari areas (Madras) as well as in the zamindari areas (West Bengal and Bihar).

With semi-feudal production relations prevailing in agri-

of Grain in the Punjab), in *Kratkiye soobshchenia instituta vostokovedeniya* (Short Reports of the Institute of Oriental Studies), XXI (Moscow, 1956), p. 40.

<sup>113</sup> V. G. Rastyannikov, 'Nayomny trud v selskom khozyaistve Pendzhabe' (Wage Labour in Punjab's Agriculture), published in *Ucheniye zapiski instituta vostokovedeniya* (Proceedings of the Institute of Oriental Studies), vol. XVIII (Moscow, 1957), pp. 235-39.

culture, there emerged from among the peasant upper stratum a type of rich peasant who rented out land. He was more commonly found in zamindari areas, where the rich peasants who sublet their land comprised a stratum of intermediary tenants. In Bengal, for example, before World War II, 20 per cent of the land covered by the survey under ryots' holdings was cultivated by share-croppers.<sup>114</sup>

Rich peasants generally rent out some of the land, cultivating the rest by hiring labourers. Both types of rich peasant are linked through various transitional forms, and he can in all cases be an owner of land, a tenant, or a semi-tenant.

Apart from rich peasants, the landlords also employ wage labour who run capitalist farms. There are no exact statistical data on this. All that can be found in literature on the subject are examples of landlord farms cited as the capitalist type.<sup>115</sup>

In zamindari areas, the development of capitalist farms was held back by economic as well as extra-economic factors. On the bulk of their estates, the right of zamindars to use the land at will was restricted. Their estates were divided into two parts—the larger part (raiayati), which was held by occupancy tenants, and the smaller part (sir, khudkasht) which the zamindar could either cultivate by using hired labour or rent out on terms which were not even nominally regulated by tenancy legislation. Occupancy tenants, as a rule, possessed the right of inheriting or alienating their plots of land, and the rent paid by them was formally regulated by law. The right of landlords to evict occupancy tenants from their plots of land was formally restricted.

That is why capitalist-type farms in zamindari areas could be developed only on sir lands. In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, in 1945-46, of 7 million acres of sir land only one million was rented out, and the zamindars cultivated the rest by hired labour. True, holders of sir land in excess of

<sup>114</sup> RLRBC, vol. II, p. 119.

<sup>115</sup> Estate Farming in India (Delhi, 1948).

100 acres (i.e. the big zamindars) rented out some 25 per cent of it.<sup>116</sup>

In ryotwari areas, establishment of large capitalist-type landlord farms was held back by the fact that the holdings were scattered and strip-farming prevailed on them. The explanation for the latter is that moneylenders and traders, as well as landlords who stemmed from the upper stratum of the village community, as a rule bought up land from the peasants in small parcels. Ryot landlords' land might be located in different villages or even taluqs and districts, or there might be several strips in one village. In East Godawari District (Andhra Pradesh), for instance, there was a landlord who held 600 acres in nine villages.<sup>117</sup> In the southern part of the country, landlords in ryotwari areas, usually rented out part of the land and used hired labour to cultivate the rest. Examples of such farms are fairly numerous.

Under colonial conditions, a special type of large-scale capitalist farm appeared, namely, plantations, on which the bulk of the tea, coffee and rubber was produced. Plantations are a special type of large-scale capitalist farm, in which production is based on manual labour, and elements of bondage (direct or veiled) hold a firm grip on the system of exploitation. The plantation owner is an industrial capitalist and landowner at the same time.

Besides capitalist-type landlord farms there were large estates, especially in the Punjab, in which feudal and capitalist ways of running the farm were combined. Such estates are generally divided into two parts, the bulk of the land being rented out, particularly under the cropsharing system, and the smaller part is used for growing high-grade seed or for breeding livestock. These farms usually have also arrangements for primary processing of agricultural raw materials. On such estates the tenant's initiative is restricted. The distribution of water for the fields, crop rotation, outlay on fertilizer and manure and carting it out

<sup>116</sup> RUPZAC, vol. II, p. 4.

<sup>117</sup> Report of the Special Officer on Land Tenures, p. 33.

to the fields are all done under the supervision of the manager and his staff.

The appearance of this type of farms and the limited development of capitalist enterprise in agriculture have the same causes. The landlords' monopoly of the land, a relative agrarian overpopulation and industrial underdevelopment—all these led the landlords to run their farms on a semi-feudal basis, under which their exploitation of the tenants yielded them high incomes without extra outlays of money on machinery, and so on.

Available data do not permit us to undermine the proportion of the capitalist structure in the country's agriculture on the eve of the agrarian reforms. According to sample surveys, in the early years following World War II 26.8 per cent of total land in Bengal and 25.6 per cent of all land in Orissa, were cultivated by hired labour.<sup>118</sup> There can be no doubt, however, that the chief employers of hired labour were the rich peasants.

An important feature of the development of agricultural capitalism in India is that the formation of the class of agricultural labourers ran ahead of the development of the capitalist enterprise in agriculture. The supply of hands in the village far exceeded the demand. The bulk of agricultural labourers (89 per cent in 1951) were day-labourers, who worked on the average 167 days in the year, forming one of the sections of the reserve army of labour.<sup>119</sup> They are hired mainly to work for one season, and in India, because of the climate, the work has to be done under a tight schedule. For this reason, during the busy season, agricultural labourers are used not only by landlords and rich peasants but also by middle peasants and even by a section of the poor peasantry.

Because of the land hunger, the impact of the vast agrarian overpopulation on the labour market, and a certain

<sup>118</sup> Ambica Ghosh, 'Agricultural Labour in Bengal,' *Indian Journal of Economics*, vol. XXVIII, part 3, No. 110, (January 1948); *Report of the Land Revenue and Land Tenure Committee* (Cuttack, 1949), p. LVI.

<sup>119</sup> RISAL, pp. 19, 22, Appendix VII.

isolation between local labour markets, agricultural labourers have been compelled to sell their labour power at a price below its value. The extensive employment in agriculture of women and children from among the families of farm labourers, proves this. According to the First Agricultural Labour Enquiry women made up 37 per cent and children 7.5 per cent of the gainfully employed members of agricultural labourers' families. Child labour was found in 74 per cent of the villages surveyed.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, as is generally known, women and children are often paid very much less than men. The 1951 Survey showed that the average annual earning of a family of an agricultural labourer was only Rs. 340.<sup>121</sup>

These specific features of the formation of the labour market in agriculture, coupled with the general economic underdevelopment, have resulted in extremely low organic structure of capital. Even in the big farms, production was based on manual labour. For example, according to the 1947 survey of 401 capitalist-type landlord farms in Uttar Pradesh, machines and mechanical implements were used in less than 25 per cent.<sup>122</sup> The development of capitalism in India in the main has proceeded with the old technical basis of agricultural production retained. That is one of the chief features of the development of capitalism in the country's agriculture. A shift to capitalist ways of operating the farm did not necessarily make for an upsurge in agricultural production.

India's exploitation by Britain and the feudal survivals in agriculture conditioned rates and forms of development of agricultural capitalism. This development stimulated relatively little expansion of agricultural production and extension of the home market along the line of individual and productive consumption,<sup>123</sup> but they considerably aggravated the social contradictions.

<sup>120</sup> RMPOS, p. 418; RISAL, p. 22.

<sup>121</sup> RISAL, Appendix VII.

<sup>122</sup> RUPZAC, vol. II, pp. 50-51.

<sup>123</sup> It is of interest to note in this connection that 44 per cent of mandays worked by farm labourers was paid for only in kind or both in cash and in kind (RISAL, Appendix VII).

## Sharpening of Class Struggle in the Indian Village

The aggravation of the contradiction between the productive forces and production relations in the Indian countryside before the reform became apparent first of all in the intensification of class antagonisms and class struggle. Following the end of World War II a powerful mass peasant movement spread throughout the country. It was anti-feudal and anti-imperialist. Alongside the heroic struggle waged by the working class, the peasant struggle became an integral part of the postwar upsurge of the Indian people's national liberation movement, which led to the country's independence.

For India as a whole the peasant movement reached its highest towards the close of 1946 and the first half of 1947, and the chief areas of the struggle at that time were several districts in Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and the Punjab in the north, the Thana District in Bombay, Kerala and Tamilnad in the south. The peasant struggle was led by the local organizations of the All-India Kisan Sabha. In 1945 this organization had an enrolled membership of 825,000.<sup>124</sup>

In 1946, a powerful armed peasant uprising began in Telengana; it embraced a sixth of Hyderabad's territory with four million population. In the areas involved some one million acres of landlords' land was distributed among the peasants, the rule of the Nizam was overthrown and people's administration set up. The Telengana peasants, united in partisan detachments, in 1946-51, fought heroically against the military and police forces sent to suppress the uprising. Following negotiations between representatives of the Communist Party of India and the Government of India, at the former's initiative, the rebels withdrew the struggle in 1951.

Between 1948 and 1951 the organized peasant movement had to carry on under difficult conditions. The Kisan Sabha was subjected to severe repression, the activity of its central bodies was suppressed, a large number of its leaders

<sup>124</sup> People's Age, 25 March 1945.

were thrown into jail, and the local organizations had to carry on their activities in semi-underground conditions. However, the peasant struggle was not crushed, and it went on. After a certain decline of the movement in north and central India in the latter half of 1947, largely due to a mass migration of Hindus and Muslims to Bengal and the Punjab, it began to develop anew. Between 1949 and 1951 there was no State in India in which the peasant movement failed to develop in individual areas in some form and to some extent.

Peasant organizations were set up in parts of the country where in the past the movement had been negligible, namely, Rajasthan, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Fairly large strata of the rural population were drawn into the peasant movement. In some States (Madras, Andhra, Bihar and Bengal among them), agricultural labourers played an important part in it. Organizations of farm labourers were set up in Andhra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar and some other States. Besides taking part in the purely peasant struggle, agricultural labourers in certain localities carried on mass struggles for better conditions. Bond labourers from among the untouchables and aboriginal tribes (Halis and Warlis in Bombay, Pannaiyals in Madras, and so on) began to join the struggle.

The demands around which the peasant struggle developed in the forties and fifties differed with different regions, depending on the specific nature of the local agrarian relationships. The chief and more common demands were for lower rents and against evictions. At the same time, they were increasingly putting forward the slogan of distribution of all landlords' land, among the actual tillers.

By the middle of 1951 the Kisan Sabha made the first attempts to resume open activity, and in the following year the Central Kisan Council held several meetings. In the spring of 1953, after a five-year lapse, the Kisan Sabha held its Eleventh Session, the delegates to which represented its 850,000 organized members.

The main points in the programme of struggle contained

in the policy Statement adopted by the Session in April 1953 were the following demands:

Abolition of landlordism without compensation and free distribution among agricultural workers and the poor peasants, of lands taken over from the landlords and the princes together with wastelands and immediate stoppage of eviction of tenants in all stages and forms and for substantial reduction in rent.<sup>125</sup>

A distinctive feature of the upsurge of the peasant movement in the early postwar years was the sharp forms of struggle in a number of localities. In some areas in Madras and West Bengal, peasants seized stocks of grain belonging to landlords, ploughed and sowed the latter's uncultivated and disused land. In other parts of the country, too, the struggle waged was just as stubborn. Especially noteworthy in this respect are instances from the peasant movement in the Tanjore District of Madras, in some districts of Andhra and Kerala, and in the districts of Basti and Ballia in Uttar Pradesh, and in the States of Manipur and Tripura, some districts of the Punjab, and others.

In the course of this struggle the peasants showed a greater willingness to end the split in their movement. In many places (Gujarat, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh) local peasant organizations merged, and in other States joint committees of representatives of different peasant organizations were set up to direct campaigns. The campaigns were for higher prices for farm produce, against eviction, against higher taxes, and so on. Unity between peasants and agricultural labourers too became stronger.

As a result of their heroic struggle, the peasants made important gains. Thus, peasants raising tobacco and sugar-cane succeeded in having higher purchasing prices fixed for these products. In the States of Punjab, Bihar and Rajasthan, the water rates were temporarily reduced, and so on. Another result of the peasantry's struggle was the working out of agrarian reforms and the beginning of their implementation.

<sup>125</sup> *Kisan News*, vol. II, Nos. 5 & 6, (May-June 1953), p. 16.

An analysis made of the conditions existing in the Indian countryside in the forties and fifties has shown that the persistence of feudal survivals in agriculture was the chief obstacle to the development of the home market, to the extension of the internal raw-material base for the light and food industries, and for solving the food problem. In other words, continued predominance of semi-feudal landholding was in sharp contrast to the requirements of India's capitalist development.

In this way, the rapid development of the peasants' struggle, on the one hand, and the objective needs of the country's economic development, on the other, influenced the implementation of agrarian reforms by the Indian National Congress, which assumed power in 1947.

## CHAPTER II

### Reform of the System of Landholding

THE first comprehensive economic programme of the Indian National Congress was adopted at its Karachi Session in 1931. In that document, as also in the special Agrarian Programmes of 1936, which were adopted at the Congress sessions held in Lucknow and Faizpur, stress was laid mainly on regulating tenancy relations. In the background of the struggle between the Congress and the Communist Party of India for leadership of the peasant movement,<sup>1</sup> the Congress Programme felt compelled to include clauses for limiting the right of landlords to evict tenants from the land, for lower rent, and for endowing broader sections of tenants with the right of occupancy tenancy, and so on. It should be emphasized that before World War II no programme of the Congress had raised the problem of altering the system of landholdings.<sup>2</sup>

The explanation for this is that the Indian bourgeoisie, having fought the colonial rule and striving to keep the leadership of the national movement, wanted to make sure that the semi-feudal landlord class at least remained neutral in the struggle.

It was only after the war, amid the developing mass peasant struggle, that the Congress, having set itself the task

<sup>1</sup> In Soviet literature this period of the peasant movement in India has been treated by A. M. Melnikov in the article 'Kretyanskoye dvizheniye v Indii v 1934-1936 gg. i obrazovaniye Vseindiyskogo soyuza' ('The Peasant Movement in India in 1934-1936 and Founding of the All-India Kisan Sabha'), in *Voprosy Istorii* ('Problems of History'), 1954, No. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Resolutions on Economic Policy and Programme 1924-1954* (New Delhi, All-India Congress Committee), pp. 3-10.

of immediate independence, put forward in its manifesto for the 1945-46 elections a demand for the elimination of 'intermediaries' between the state and the peasants. It read as follows: 'The reform of the land system, which is so urgently needed in India, involves the removal of intermediaries between the peasant and the state. The rights of such intermediaries should therefore be acquired on payment of equitable compensation.'<sup>3</sup> This helped to strengthen the leading role of the National Congress in the freedom struggle which was spreading all over the country.

After the formation of the Interim Government, headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, and Congress governments in the provinces (in Bengal and the United Provinces, for instance) committees were set up which began to draw up bills for the alienation of intermediaries' land.

When India won independence, the national bourgeoisie was faced with the need of formulating more clearly its policy on the agrarian question, the solution of which was becoming increasingly urgent. A special committee appointed in November 1947 and headed by Jawaharlal Nehru worked out directives for the Congress economic policy, which was approved at a special meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in 1948. Clause 2 of the Section dealing with agriculture read: 'All intermediaries between the tiller and the state should be eliminated and all middlemen should be replaced by non-profit-making agencies, such as cooperatives.'<sup>4</sup> And paragraph 13 of that Section says in addition: 'The maximum size of holding should be fixed. The surplus land over such a maximum should be acquired and placed at the disposal of the village cooperatives. Small holdings should be consolidated and steps taken to prevent further fragmentation.'<sup>5</sup>

At a conference of revenue ministers held in Delhi in December 1947 it was proposed that a special committee be set up to work out an agrarian policy. Accordingly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President of the Indian National

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

Congress, appointed an Agrarian Reforms Committee, headed by the prominent Gandhian economist Dr. J. C. Kumarappa. The committee made a detailed survey of agrarian relations in the country, collecting oral and written evidence, which made up more than 6,000 typed pages. After analysing the material, the committee in the middle of 1949 submitted its report, which is an important source for studying agrarian relations in India in the period under review.

In its recommendations, the committee, in contrast to the official programme of the Congress, held that the main question was the *immediate* abolition of all forms of feudal exploitation of the peasantry, though, certainly with a moderate compensation. The committee envisaged that following the allotment of land to tenants, including cropsharers and even some groups of agricultural labourers, small and medium-sized individual farms would be set up, and also various types of agricultural producers' cooperatives to consolidate chiefly the holdings of small peasants. It is significant that the committee opposed the establishment of landlord-type capitalist farms.

As we shall see later, some of the recommendations of the Kumarappa Committee were later made the basis of the agrarian programme of the National Congress. However, two points, namely, rapid and effective abolition of *all forms* of semi-feudal exploitation and simultaneous extension of rights to peasants, and conferring of ownership only on those who personally participate in cultivation, were never included in the agrarian legislation in the States. Neither did the Congress agrarian programme include the following basic recommendation of the committee: 'There should be no scope for exploitation of one class by another.'<sup>6</sup>

As we can see, the Kumarappa Committee went somewhat further in its recommendations than the other Congress bodies. And no wonder. For incorporated in the *Report of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee* was the agrarian programme of the Congress Leftwing, who expressed the interests of the peasant followers of the Con-

<sup>6</sup> RCARC, p. 8.

gress and the numerous urban petty bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois intelligentsia.

Dr. P. C. Joshi of the Delhi School of Economics was perfectly right when he called this report 'one of the most radical documents of the Indian National Congress in independent India inasmuch as its recommendations approximated to a very large extent to the objective of *land to the tiller* and the abolition of non-cultivating interests from land.'<sup>7</sup>

Thus, even the earlier basic documents dealing with the agrarian policy show that the National Congress was not for abolition of the semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry, but for only alienation of part of the landlord holdings and that too with compensation. Moreover, what they meant by the system of 'intermediaries' was not semi-feudal landholding in general but landholding of the zamindari type.

As has been shown in Chapter I, the zamindars, who constituted the core of the landlord class in the provinces of former British India and served as a bulwark of British imperialism, were the most reactionary part of the landlord class. They were least connected with the national bourgeoisie, and limiting their holdings was the first step in implementing agrarian legislation.

### *Reform of the Zamindari System*

Just before carrying out the agrarian reforms, the class of zamindar landowners consisted, as was shown in the preceding chapter, of several subclasses, whose legal status as private landowners was regulated in each individual case by special enactments made from time to time by the British authorities. Therefore no unified agrarian legislation covering the whole country has been enacted. Each State worked out its own agrarian legislation (to be more exact—an act abolishing the zamindari system); it was passed

<sup>7</sup> Dr. P. C. Joshi, 'Land Reforms in India,' *Perspective*, No. 2 (June 1961), p. 106.

by the State's legislature and then assented to by the President of India.<sup>8</sup> A formally legal approach is the characteristic feature of the agrarian reforms; they are aimed not to eliminate the landlord class, but, on the contrary, to preserve it.

Indeed, the land reform acts have not affected landlord holdings in ryotwari areas, which embraced 57 per cent of the total land under cultivation in the country.<sup>9</sup>

In the zamindari areas not all the land held by zamindars has been alienated. Under the laws providing for the abolition of the zamindari system the category of land known as sir remained their property.

As has been pointed out before, the main distinction between the sir and the rest of the zamindar's estate is that sir tenants did not enjoy the right of occupancy. In anticipation of agrarian reforms, the zamindars, with the aim of extending the sir, undertook the mass eviction of tenants possessing the right of occupancy, as a long period (usually 12 years) of continuous cultivation of the plot was the main condition for obtaining these rights by a tenant. In the latter half of the forties the struggle against the zamindars' attempt to enlarge the sirs was one of the chief reasons for the growth of the peasant movement in the zamindari areas.

The zamindars' inability to set up capitalist farms on the land 'cleared' of tenants led to laying waste huge tracts of land. According to some data, in Uttar Pradesh some 10 million acres of cultivable land in zamindari estates were in disuse before implementation of the land reform act.<sup>10</sup>

In some States the zamindars tried to circumvent the law

<sup>8</sup> In some States separate laws were enacted for each kind of zamindari landholding (as, for instance, in Bombay, Madhya Bharat and Saurashtra). The author made use of the following texts of the land reform acts in the principal States: *Agricultural Legislation in India*, vol. IV, *Land Reforms (Abolition of Intermediaries)* (Delhi, 1953); *Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act*, by Prakash, Sixth ed. (Allahabad, 1956); *West Bengal Acts and Ordinances* (Calcutta, 1954); (Ditto, 1955); *Quarterly Legislation Recorder*, No. 29 (Calcutta, 1956).

<sup>9</sup> *India, 1958: A Reference Annual*, p. 277.

<sup>10</sup> *Cross Roads*, 31 August 1952.

by dividing up some of the raiyati land among the members of their families.<sup>11</sup>

The eviction of tenants from zamindars' estates aggravated the situation in the villages to such an extent that the governments of certain States were forced to issue special ordinances prohibiting evictions, and in agrarian reform acts clauses were included providing for restoration of evicted occupancy tenants.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, in the States where zamindars had sir of negligible acreage or none, the land reform acts provided for setting up sir lands at the expense of peasant holdings. In Saurashtra girasdars in this way received 250,000 acres taken away from peasants, or more than 15 per cent of the total area of their earlier holdings, and barkhalidars received 225,000 acres, or approximately a third of their former holdings.<sup>13</sup> In West Bengal, landlords may keep as their khas lands up to 25 acres. Calculations show that khas lands amounted to four million acres in Bengal or 13 acres per zamindar family.<sup>14</sup> In that State, too, implementation of the law has led to the expropriation of ryots.

The best lands are given to the landlords. In West Bengal the law entitled the landlord to choose his sir.

The ceiling set for sir considerably exceeds the land held by the average peasant farm (in acres):

State	Sir ceiling	Average
		Peasant farm
Assam	133	5.3
Ajmer	40	11.5
West Bengal	25	5

In the States where sir lands were entered in the records in favour of the landlord without fixing any limit (as in

<sup>11</sup> This was stated by the Madras Revenue Minister in the Legislative Assembly, quoted from *Feudatory and Zamindari India*, vol. XXVIII, Nos. 1-2, p. 190.

<sup>12</sup> In 1949 a special act was passed in Madras prohibiting the eviction of tenants on zamindars' estates (*The Madras Tenants and Ryots Protection Act, 1949*).

<sup>13</sup> A Memorandum on Land Reform in Saurashtra, pp. 19, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Bhowani Sen, *Indian Land System*, p. 84.

Madras, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar among others), a sir could be a vast holding, by Indian standards. N. Prasada Rao, former General Secretary of All-India Kisan Sabha, cited the example of the ex-zamindar of Challapalli, who had 12,000 acres as sir.<sup>15</sup> In all, sir lands amounted to millions of acres: 7 million in Uttar Pradesh, 3.9 million in Madhya Pradesh, 3.5 million in Bihar, and so on.<sup>16</sup>

Besides, zamindars were allowed to retain their farmstead and all buildings, agricultural implements and machinery, livestock and other movable property accumulated through feudal exploitation.

A distinct feature of the zamindari abolition legislation is the payment of compensation to the landlords. It is interesting to note that in the process of preparation and implementation of the agrarian reforms the amount of compensation due to the landlords increased substantially. \*

Originally, according to calculations made by the Reserve Bank of India, the amount of compensation was to be Rs. 3,500-4,000 million.<sup>17</sup> However, by the end of 1953 it had increased to Rs. 4,310 million,<sup>18</sup> and by the end of 1955 the figure rose to Rs. 6,150 million (but it was not the final figure).<sup>19</sup> During the following years the total compensation rolls have been steadily increasing, going up to Rs. 6,250 million in 1959, Rs. 6,480 in 1960, Rs. 6,700 in 1961.<sup>20</sup> It will be of interest to note in this connection that, according to Indian periodicals of the most diverse trends, the compensa-

<sup>15</sup> N. Prasada Rao, *Abolition of Landlordism—The Key Task* (All-India Kisan Sabha), p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> RUPZAC, vol. I, pp. 220, 223; vol. II, p. 4. In Uttar Pradesh, zamindars retained only that part of the sir lands which was not rented out; taking into account that a good part of the zamindars in this State were a peasant stratum, an approximate estimate would show that zamindar landlords kept roughly 1.5 million acres.

<sup>17</sup> ASI, vol. V, No. 11 (February, 1951), p. 815.

<sup>18</sup> G. D. Patel, *The Indian Land Problem and Legislation* (Bombay, 1954), p. 505.

<sup>19</sup> Government of India, *Review of the First Five Year Plan* (Delhi, 1957), p. 315.

<sup>20</sup> India, 1961: *A Reference Annual* (Delhi, 1961), p. 263; Government of India, *Third Five Year Plan Plan* (Delhi, 1961), p. 222.

tion amount often went up as a result of direct encouragement, and even pressure, by representatives of the Congress High Command.<sup>21</sup>

Compensation is paid not only to zamindars for alienated land, but also to some groups of the feudal landlord class who had virtually lost their rights during British rule itself and had been granted an assignment of land revenue by the colonial administration (alamaliks in the Punjab and Pepsu, saranjamadars in Bombay, and a few others).<sup>22</sup> Actually the land was not alienated from these groups of feudals but they lost the right to receive the fixed assignments of land revenue collected from certain areas. In some States (Hyderabad, for instance), compensation is paid also to the former pensioners of landlords.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the government has to pay large annual subsidies to religious and charitable institutions whose lands were taken from them under the reform.<sup>24</sup> According to the *Report of the Committee on Tenancy Reform*, these annuities are 'equal to their net income from their estates'.<sup>25</sup>

It should be mentioned that in Kashmir, where the agrarian reform was carried out in the wake of a powerful upsurge of the democratic movement and nation-wide resistance to Pakistan's aggression, the zamindari-type land was taken away without compensation.

Despite the serious difficulties India is experiencing in finding resources for her plans of economic development vast amounts are diverted to pay compensation to ex-zamindars. While, according to figures of the Planning Commis-

<sup>21</sup> For Madras, see: *Feudatory and Zamindari India*, vol. XXVIII, Nos. 1-2, p. 28; for Bihar see *Commerce*, vol. 76, No. 1951 (29 May 1948), p. 922; for Rajasthan see *New Age*, 3 January 1954.

<sup>22</sup> *ASI*, vol. VII, No. 6 (September 1952) p. 329; *ASI*, vol. VII, No. 8 (November 1952), p. 442; *ASI*, vol. VII, No. 10 (January 1953), p. 572.

<sup>23</sup> A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition*, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Review of the First Five Year Plan*, p. 315.

<sup>25</sup> *Reports of the Committee of Panel on Land Reforms* (Delhi, 1959), p. 19.

sion, Rs. 570 million were spent under the First Five Year Plan to implement comprehensive measures for developing rural areas (Community Projects and National Extension Service),<sup>26</sup> Rs. 670 million were paid out during approximately the same period to zamindars, in cash or in bonds. Up to the close of 1960 total payments came to Rs. 1,642 million.<sup>27</sup>

The total payments of compensation by States is as follows:

TABLE 8

<i>State</i>	<i>Amount of compensation</i>
Andhra Pradesh	175
Assam	50
Bihar	2,389
Gujarat and Maharashtra	287
Kerala	2
Madhya Pradesh	221
Madras	67
Mysore	39
Orissa	781
Rajasthan	631
Uttar Pradesh	1,790
West Bengal	700

Source: *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, p. 263.

What strikes one in analysing the figures in the table is that compensation is considerably uneven in the States. That is due first to the fact that the acreage which was subject to alienation is not the same in the different States, and second, that zamindars with different annual incomes are not paid a uniform rate of compensation. Here are some examples.

In Uttar Pradesh, compensation varies from 100 to 2,000

<sup>26</sup> *Review of the First Five Year Plan*, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, p. 263.

per cent of the 'net income', depending on the amount of land revenue which had been paid by the zamindars: where the revenue was up to Rs. 25, 2,000 per cent of the 'net income'; from Rs. 25 to 2,000, from 1,700 to 500 per cent; and from Rs. 2,000 to 10,000, from 300 to 100 per cent.

In West Bengal, the principle followed in fixing compensation was somewhat different. Small zamindars whose 'net income' did not exceed Rs. 500 are paid 20 times the amount; middle zamindars whose income ranged between Rs. 5,000 to 20,000 get ten times down to six times the amount and zamindars who had an income of Rs. 50,000 or over get triple or double the 'net income'.

It should be pointed out that in most States the system adopted was the one originally worked out in Uttar Pradesh.

In some States the top zamindars get especially large amounts. In Rajasthan, for instance, those whose annual 'net income' was Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 20,000 are paid from 400 to 500 per cent of the 'net income'; those who had an income of 20,000 to 30,000 receive 300 per cent of the amount, and those whose income exceeded Rs. 30,000 get double the amount.<sup>28</sup> The explanation for this is that in the former princely states the influence of the feudal elements is considerably stronger than in the industrially developed States.

Zamindars' 'net income' was reckoned in a special manner prescribed for the States by the zamindari abolition acts. Not only the average rent received was taken into account, but also income from forests, pastures and other appendages of landed property, from duties inherited from the feudal era, such as the levy at market places, road and bridge tolls, and so on.

Notwithstanding the fact that the compensation was in inverse proportion to the zamindars' income, the total amount of compensation distributed among the landlords was by no means even. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh, the small zamindars, who made up 85 per cent of the 'inter-

<sup>28</sup> Report of the Committee on Tenancy Reform, Annexure I.

mediaries,' were getting 65 per cent of the total.<sup>29</sup> A good part of the compensation went into the pockets of the wealthier landlords. The payment of compensation and the incomplete acquisition of the landlords' estates preserve the zamindars as part of India's landlord class.

Where then does the money to pay compensation come from? An examination of this will enable us to discern to a certain extent what changes these reforms have made in the life of the principal classes in the village: the peasants and the landlords.

The land revenue paid by the tenants serves as a source for compensation. In most of the States tenants on the alienated lands continue to pay the earlier rent, but directly to the state.<sup>30</sup> It should be emphasized, however, that the compensation received annually by the zamindars is less than their earlier income from rent. What has taken place is redistribution of the money equal to the surplus product collected from tenants and other classes of society. This redistribution is definitely in favour of Indian bourgeoisie. This is seen in the new budget receipts used to speed up the development of the country's capitalist economy. The figures are given in Table 9 (see p. 54).

As the payment of compensation is to stretch over 40 years, it is not hard to figure out that they will get from one-half to one-fortieth of their earlier income (excluding interest) annually from the alienated part of their land. Moreover, it should be remembered that the bulk of the zamindars' land has been taken over: 87 per cent in Uttar Pradesh, 84 per cent in Bihar, and so on. And that is the case also in the States which fixed the minimum and maximum acreage to be reserved to zamindars (West Bengal,

<sup>29</sup> RUPZAC, vol. I, pp. 419-420. During the debate on the Land Reform Bill in Madras one of the speakers in the Legislative Assembly stated that 200 families of big zamindars would get three times as much in compensation as 2,000 families of small zamindars (*The Hindu*, 29 October 1948).

<sup>30</sup> In some States land revenue rates went down as compared with earlier rental rates. In Madras, Andhra and Hyderabad they were cut to the level existing in ryotwari areas; in Saurashtra too land revenue rates were lowered.

TABLE 9

*Financial Implication of Abolition of Intermediaries*  
(Rs. thousands)

States	<i>Land-revenue</i>						Net annual increase in revenue
	Before abolition	After abolition	Increase in land-revenue	Decrease in revenue on other accounts	Increased administrative charges		
Bihar	10,900	160,500	149,600	23,800	43,000	82,800	
Orissa	5,200	14,400	9,200	—	5,000	4,200	
Madras	4,540	7,500	2,960	—	1,800	1,160	
Madhya Bharat	10,000	17,050	7,050	—	1,850	5,200	
Uttar Pradesh	78,400	195,000	116,600	37,100	13,000	66,500	
West Bengal	15,400	52,300	36,900	4,800	8,500	23,600	

Source: *Report of the Committee on Tenancy Reform, Annexure II* (The data are for zamindari areas only).

Assam, Ajmer, Rajasthan, Bhopal, Vindhya Pradesh, and Saurashtra). To bestow the landlords with a part of the land held by tenants with occupancy right in addition to sir lands would have given rise to such sharpening of the class struggle in the countryside that it would have imperilled the very existence of the landlord class.

Thus, most of zamindar-type landlords were considerably weakened economically following the implementation of the reforms. In his analysis of the results of the agrarian reforms in Hyderabad, Dr. A. M. Khusro painted a very graphic picture of the impoverishment of the jagirdars, a good part of whom could not adapt themselves to the new conditions, and, continuing to lead a life of parasites, gradually sold off all their personal and real property.<sup>31</sup> However, though weakened economically—and therefore politically—the zamindars continued to exist as part of the landlord class.

Now, then, what changes has the land reform effected

<sup>31</sup> A. M. Khusro, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-48.

in the condition of peasant-tenants? The upper stratum of tenants, who held land directly from zamindars or tenure-holders, acquired a status similar to that of landholders in ryotwari areas. In most of the States (Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Bhopal, Rajasthan, Ajmer, the barkhali lands in Saurashtra, Madhya Bharat, Madhya Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh, Hyderabd, Andhra and Madras) those tenants gained this status automatically when the new land records were prepared, the record being one of the elements of the enforcement of the zamindari abolition acts. In the other States (Uttar Pradesh, Bombay, the girasi lands in Saurashtra, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Mysore) they obtained these rights by payment of compensation, which in Uttar Pradesh, for instance, was equal to 10 times (12 times if paid by instalments) of the land revenue from their plots, and in Saurashtra six times.

Let us take Saurashtra as an example to see how far tenants are really able to acquire the rights of a landowner through payment of compensation. In 1953-54 the land revenue in Saurashtra equalled Rs. 3.5 per acre of fully assessed cultivated area<sup>32</sup>, while the rate of compensation was Rs. 21 per acre. The main cash crops in Saurashtra are cotton and groundnut; in 1953-54 they made up 13 and 15 per cent respectively of gross cropped area<sup>33</sup>. In the same year, over roughly 55 per cent of the total area under crops were sown bajra and jowar. According to the Bench Mark Survey Report on Manavadar Community Project Block (Surat District, Gujarat), the sale proceeds from these cash crops accounted for 96.3 per cent of the total value of the sales performed by the selected cultivators during a year from May 1953 to April 1954<sup>34</sup>. This ratio is, to all appearance, characteristic of many Saurashtra districts. The main cash income of cultivators in Saurashtra depended on disposals of cotton and groundnut. As is generally known,

<sup>32</sup> *Indian Land Revenue Statistics, 1952-53 and 1953-54*, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> *Indian Agricultural Statistics, 1953-1954*, vol. 1 (Delhi, 1956), pp. 23, 147, 149.

<sup>34</sup> *Bench Mark Survey Reports on Manavadar Block—Bombay, Nowgong Block—Madhya Pradesh, and Rajpur Block—Madhya Pradesh* (Delhi, 1957), p. 19.

jowar and bajra are the least marketable cereal crops in India. A comparison of the areas under the main food crops (jowar and bajra) and main cash crops (groundnut and cotton) in Saurashtra in 1953-54 shows that on the average the income from an acre under groundnut or cotton had to go to pay compensation for three acres of cropped lands.

Let us cite a few figures. The yield of cotton in Saurashtra over the five-year period between 1947 and 1952 averaged 1.5 maunds per acre, and in 1950-54 about 0.85 maunds per acre<sup>35</sup>. In 1953-54, according to an agro-economic survey of Kodinar taluk in Saurashtra, the average price of cotton (in 'Kapas') realised by the farmers amounted to Rs. 23.37<sup>36</sup>. Thus, the average gross income per acre on lands under cotton amounted to Rs. 20 to 30, and if out of this money the peasant had to pay compensation also for the land under non-marketable food crops he found himself in a fix. Peasants who raised groundnut were better off. According to the same data, in 1953-54 the groundnut crop averaged 6-7 maunds per acre, and the price realized by the farmers averaged Rs. 103-120. In all cases, however, we have assumed that the peasant could spend the entire gross income from cotton and groundnut, leaving nothing for production outlays, for family consumption, and for other necessary expenditures. For poor peasants who barely manage to make ends meet, such a financial operation is possible only if they can get a timely loan. That is why the Land Mortgage Bank of Saurashtra has granted them loans amounting to 75 per cent of the compensation amount<sup>37</sup>. Thanks to government assistance, which at the same time burdened the peasants with a mortgage indebtedness, of the 55,000 tenants on girasi lands in Saurashtra 43,000 had paid up by the middle of 1954. An interesting feature is that

<sup>35</sup> Quinquennial Average Yield per Acre of Principal Crops in India, 1947-48 to 1951-52 (Delhi, 1956), p. viii; Abstract of Agricultural Statistics, India 1954 (Delhi, 1956), p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> C. H. Shah, *Problems of Small Farmers: Report on an Enquiry into the Problems of Low-Income Farmers in Kodinar Taluka* (Bombay, Indian Society of Agricultural Economics), p. 78.

<sup>37</sup> A Memorandum on Land Reforms in Saurashtra, p. 25.

some 10,000 or 25 per cent, paid up the compensation money without resorting to a loan from the Mortgage Bank<sup>38</sup>.

Evidently, that is more or less the prosperous peasantry. According to data adduced in the above-mentioned survey of Kodinar taluk, big farmers, as against the small, took to commercial crops over larger part of their lands and received higher prices for the produce they sold.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, where the farmer grew wheat instead of jowar or bajra, he was in a much better position to pay the compensation, which amounted to Rs. 21 per acre. The average yield of wheat for those years in Saurashtra was five maunds per acre on dry lands and 16.25 on irrigated<sup>40</sup>. The price per maund of wheat on the same wholesale markets in 1954 was Rs. 13-14<sup>41</sup>. Consequently, the value in market prices of the wheat reaped from an acre was Rs. 65 to Rs. 211. Assuming that a higher land revenue is collected from under wheat (particularly irrigated land), even then peasants growing wheat are in a much better position than the bulk of the former tenants on girasi lands.

In the light of these data, it is clear, too, why in Uttar Pradesh, one of India's largest States, the overwhelming majority of tenants failed to pay up and did not become landowners. In that State, after the reform, occupancy tenants, holders of former zamindari land, that was taken over, acquired the status of sirdars, whose right to alienate their plots is somewhat restricted. To obtain the rights of bhumidhars, i.e., full landed proprietors who are entitled to a 50 per cent exemption from the regular land revenue, sirdars had to pay as compensation 10 times the land revenue imposed on their plots. The number of sirdars in Uttar Pradesh at the beginning of the reform was 15,000,000 and they held 73.3 per cent of the cultivated area in zamindari estates<sup>42</sup>. The government of this State, unlike that of Saurashtra, where the number of tenants who paid

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> C. H. Shah, *Problems of Small Farmers*, pp. 70, 78.

<sup>40</sup> *Quinquennial Average Yield per Acre*, p. vii.

<sup>41</sup> *Bulletin on Food Statistics*, Sixth Issue (Delhi, 1956), p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> P. C. Joshi, *U. P. Zamindari Abolition* (Lucknow, 1952), p. 57.

up and became landowners was negligible as compared with Uttar Pradesh, not only failed to give sirdars any financial assistance, but on the contrary, tried to utilize the compensation money to cover the advance payments to the zamindars. In 1949 the Zamindari Abolition Fund was set up there, into which, through direct pressure on the sirdar tenants, by the end of March 1956, Rs. 225.5 million had been collected from the compensation money received.<sup>43</sup>

A calculation made by us from data contained in the survey of the results of the agrarian reform in Uttar Pradesh showed that on 1 April 1956 the rights of bhumidhars had been acquired by sirdar tenants, who possessed altogether some 19 per cent of the land alienated from the zamindars<sup>44</sup>.

In most of the States, as in Uttar Pradesh, there was no material change in the condition of the tenants on the former zamindari lands after the agrarian reforms.

The bulk of the tenants on the former zamindari estates now paid land revenue equal to the earlier rent, and even in the States where the land revenue had been reduced as compared with the former rent (Madras, Andhra, Hyderabad and Saurashtra), the reduction (except, perhaps, in Saurashtra) did not amount to very much. In Hyderabad, for instance, it was but nine per cent on the average.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, there remained a certain inequality between landlords and peasant landholders. The ex-zamindars to whom full proprietary rights were granted gratis—retained their privileged position as taxpayers. For example, in Uttar Pradesh in 1945-46 rent averaged Rs. 6 per acre, while land revenue paid by zamindars on sir lands was only about Rupee one per acre.<sup>46</sup> It is significant that in 1955 the Pre-

<sup>43</sup> Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, vol. XI, No. 6 (June 1957), p. 560.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. It should be pointed out that since even before the reform sirdars had enjoyed the rights of occupancy tenants, their acquisition of the rights of bhumidhars was of no particular value to them.

<sup>45</sup> A. M. Khusro, op. cit., p. 101. Before World War II rents in zamindari estates in Madras were 50 per cent higher on the average than in ryotwari areas (RLRCB, vol. I, p. 88).

<sup>46</sup> RUPZAC, vol. 1, pp. 529, 531.

sident of India gave his assent to an amendment to the agrarian reform act in Saurashtra providing for continuing the privileged rate on the lands of barkhalidars which they acquired by exchanging parts of their sir with other land-holders.<sup>47</sup>

At the same time there can be no doubt that all tenants profited by the cancellation of the different feudal cesses (abwabs) by the agrarian reforms. However, this gain was virtually wiped out by mounting taxes both direct and indirect.

When the author visited some villages in West Bengal and Bihar in 1957 and 1961, practically all peasants complained of the growing tax burden in recent years. In the poll taken in the village of Sahajapur (West Bengal) in 1955-56 by staff members of the Agro-Economic Research Centre of Visva-Bharati University 73 per cent of the peasants polled considered the irrigation rate high, and 85 per cent regarded as unfavourable paying a tax or levy on lands developed by the government.<sup>48</sup>

In some States (Hyderabad and the Punjab) the land-revenue rates were raised,<sup>49</sup> and in many States betterment levies were instituted in the last five years (the Punjab, Rajasthan, Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras and Andhra among others).<sup>50</sup> The additional taxes and cesses considerably heightened the basic land revenue rates: in the Punjab from 50 to 200 per cent, in Andhra up to 80 per cent when in 1954 additional taxes were introduced and up to another 50 per cent when the additional taxes of 1956 were imposed.<sup>51</sup> The rates of the irrigation cess in Madras, An-

<sup>47</sup> ASI, vol. X, No. 9 (December 1955), p. 681.

<sup>48</sup> J. P. Bhattacharjee and associates, *Sahajapur: Socio-Economic Study of a West Bengal Village* (Santiniketan, 1958), p. 125, Table II. 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Growing Tax Burden on the Peasantry* (New Delhi, All-India Kisan Sabha, 1955), p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17; Ajit Das Gupta, *On Taxation* (New Delhi, 1957), p. 14.

<sup>51</sup> ASI, vol. IX, No. 9 (December 1954), p. 584; vol. X, No. 11 (February 1956), p. 822; vol. XII, No. 4 (July 1957), p. 531.

dhra, Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab and other States also went up.

To what extent the direct taxes increased can be seen from the following: in Andhra, where, as we have seen, additional taxes were imposed in 1954-56, the Legislative Assembly in 1957 enacted laws imposing three more agricultural taxes.<sup>52</sup>

The peasantry vigorously resisted this trend in taxation policy. Between 1952 and 1959 the struggle waged in the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and other States against the raising of old and the imposition of new agricultural taxes and levies was an important activity of the organized peasant movement under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha. It should be mentioned that as a result of pressure from the peasantry some of the State governments were compelled to put off imposition of new direct taxes.<sup>53</sup>

The biggest peasant action was the anti-betterment levy struggle in the Punjab in early 1959. The *AICC Economic Review*, commenting on the Punjab peasants' reaction to the government's decision to recover from the peasants the capital cost of Bhakra Nangal Project and the Western Jumna Canal Project, justly stated that '...their fear of a considerable hardship ahead is not unjustifiable.' He was correct too in stating that 'it is ... important, before a State government contemplates a betterment levy, to assess how much in the appreciation of the value of land is due to real benefit derived from irrigation facilities and if not part of it could be attributed to speculation in land.'<sup>54</sup> As stated in one of the Kisan Sabha documents, 'it is due to the united struggle of the peasants that the State government has been

<sup>52</sup> ASI, vol. XII, No. 11 (February 1958), p. 1259.

<sup>53</sup> See All-India Kisan Sabha publications: *General Secretary's Report to the 12th Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha*, Moga, September 15-19, 1954, pp. 16-19; *Report to the Thirteenth Session*, Dahanu, May 17-22, 1955, by N. Prasada Rao, General Secretary, pp. 27-32; *Report to the Fourteenth Annual Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha* by N. Prasada Rao, pp. 11-13.

<sup>54</sup> AICC Economic Review, vol. X, No. 19 (1 February 1959), p. 24.

forced to reduce the quantum of the levy from Rs. 104 crores to Rs. 42 crores.<sup>55</sup>

Direct taxes on the rural population were increased everywhere, in the ryotwari as well as in the zamindari areas.

It should, moreover, be remembered that while earlier zamindars did not always succeed in collecting full rent because of resistance by peasants, the new tax collector, the state, found it easier to overcome peasant resistance. The Bengal Land Revenue Commission had already noted the numerous complaints of zamindars that they were unable to collect the rent from their tenants.<sup>56</sup> 'It is the rule rather than the exception that rents in permanently settled estates are ten years in arrears, and in some estates they may be more', the commission stated in its report.<sup>57</sup> But today the situation is different. During his visits to India in 1957 and 1961, the present author heard in former zamindari estates complaints from ryots that land revenue was being collected much more strictly. As pointed out by Mahesh Chand, an expert on agrarian relations in Uttar Pradesh, 'any extra extortion by the zamindars has vanished but so has vanished the concession of time which the tenants could secure from the zamindars for late deposit of rent in case of failure of crops.'<sup>58</sup> The government agency for tax collection strictly collects not only all taxes but also the arrears in rent accumulated before the agrarian reforms.<sup>59</sup>

The preservation today of the old system of land revenue set up by the British in the 19th century indicates that

<sup>55</sup> Sixteenth Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha: Proceedings and Resolutions (April-May, 1959), p. 13.

<sup>56</sup> RLRBC, vol. I, 39.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>58</sup> Mahesh Chand, 'Effectiveness of Provision in Tenancy Legislation for Security of Tenure in UP,' *The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. XII, No. 2 (April-June 1957), p. 116.

<sup>59</sup> In Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh special acts were passed providing for the collection of rent in arrears. ASI, vol. VIII, No. 12 (March 1953), p. 701; vol. IX, No. 12 (March 1955), p. 840; vol. X, No. 11 (February 1956), p. 821.

land revenue remains essentially a land rent collected from the peasants. The mounting direct taxes in recent years and the redistribution of incomes from the land revenue exploitation of the peasantry between the landlords and bourgeoisie in favour of the latter shows that this form of exploitation of the peasants by the national bourgeoisie is growing all the time.

To sum up, the condition of tenants who have become owners of their land has not improved perceptibly. This is so even if we leave out of consideration the exploitation of the peasantry by traders and moneylenders and monopoly capital in the form of unequal exchange between town and country. For the bulk of the tenants the economic importance of the change in their legal status is insignificant. It is instructive that even in the former princely state of Hyderabad, in a survey of lands acquired from the jagirdars only 42 per cent of the ryots questioned confirmed that since the reform 'there was greater security in the possession of land today compared with the jagir days,' and only nine per cent stated that they had made some improvements on their farms.<sup>60</sup>

Moreover, not all the peasants in zamindari areas became 'owners' even nominally. Subtenants exploited by the peasant upper stratum and the bulk of the tenants on the home farms of ex-zamindars did not get rights of occupancy to their plots of land. In the course of the implementation of zamindari abolition acts subtenants and the bulk of tenants on private lands of ex-zamindars acquired (in some States for compensation) occupancy rights of varying degrees. However, zamindari abolition legislation did not concern itself with the condition of the poorest and most exploited part of the rural population, namely, the cropsharers and agricultural labourers—the actual tillers of the soil.

As there was no redistribution of the land whatever, the bulk of the new 'owners' were left with their tiny, un-economic holdings.

<sup>60</sup> A. M. Khusro, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

The basic question—the land question—remained unsolved. This is proved by the data in the Census of Holdings conducted in 1954-55 by the government (see Table 10, p. 64).

An analysis of the figures in the table shows that after the reform of the zamindari system 70-80 per cent of the owners (the bulk of the peasantry) had holdings of less than 10 acres, amounting in all to 30 per cent of the total area, and owners of the largest holdings (over 45 acres) comprised 3-4 per cent of the proprietors and owned 20-25 per cent of the total land. Thus, the bulk of the peasants in the countryside remained landless or land-poor as before the reform of the zamindari system. Worthy of note is the appraisal of the reform of the zamindari system by Dr. Daniel Thorner, an American economist, who personally visited scores of villages in different States. Here is what he wrote of the results of the zamindari abolition in Uttar Pradesh:

In sum, the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition Act has provided for a new hierarchy of tenure-holders in place of the old one; but the two are all too recognizably similar. At the top are bhumidhars, below them sirdars, and still further down the asamis. At the bottom of the heap remain the mass of cropsharers and landless labourers. The zamindars have disappeared but these same persons have been confirmed as landholders, often of very substantial tracts of the best quality of land. Intermediaries as such are not allowed and the leasing out of land is prohibited, but it is possible to retain the status of a 'cultivator' while tilling solely with the labour of hired workers, or by giving out one's fields to crop-sharers. For the great bulk of the peasantry who were classified as sirdars, the tenure remains substantially the same, the rent remains exactly the same, and the most important new feature is that the rent is collected by government rather than by the zamindar.<sup>61</sup>

It should be underscored that the agrarian reforms were attended by a sharp political struggle. The peasants demanded a radical solution of the agrarian question and,

<sup>61</sup> Daniel Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India* (Delhi, 1956), p. 25.

TABLE 10

Group-wise Distribution of Land in States  
[Percentages]

Grades of holdings in acres,	owners	holders	RAJASTHAN		SAURASHTRA		BOMBAY		MADHYA PRADESH		BIHARAT		HYDERABAD		ANDHRA		MADRAS	
			holders	owners	holders	owners	holders	owners	holders	owners	holders	owners	holders	owners	holders	owners	holders	owners
Up to 5	51.4	11.0	9.9	1.2	51.3	10.8	59.4	13.6	45.6	9.6	32.0	4.5	66.8	18.1	67.6	20.0		
5 to 10	20.9	15.7	13.4	4.2	20.2	14.7	18.9	16.2	22.6	16.0	21.3	9.3	16.0	16.5	17.4	18.5		
10 to 15	10.1	12.8	13.4	6.8	10.2	12.7	8.4	12.3	12.1	14.5	13.8	10.0	6.7	12.0	6.5	12.1		
15 to 30	11.4	24.4	33.6	29.7	11.9	25.2	8.7	21.4	13.3	27.3	19.1	23.9	6.8	20.7	5.7	18.0		
30 to 45	3.4	12.6	17.5	25.7	3.0	13.3	2.4	10.2	3.5	12.5	6.8	14.6	1.9	10.0	1.4	7.8		
45 to 60	1.3	6.8	7.0	14.4	1.4	7.0	0.9	5.8	1.3	6.3	2.0	9.0	0.8	5.6	0.5	4.3		
Over 60	1.5	16.7	5.2	18.0	1.4	16.3	1.3	20.5	1.4	13.9	4.1	28.7	1.0	17.1	0.9	19.0		

Source: Second Five Year Plan, pp. 213-6, 220.

as a minimum, the quickest possible implementation of the reform legislation. As we have stated before, the reforms themselves were brought about by a powerful upsurge of the peasant movement since the war. This was expressly and unequivocally stated by the late Shri S. K. Sinha, Chief Minister of Bihar. In 1946, in his speech in the Legislative Assembly, he said: 'I tell you that you are at the crest of a volcano. The volcano may burst at any moment. It is only to save you from destruction that I have brought this resolution.'<sup>62</sup> Almost in the same vein are the following remarks in the report of the UP Zamindari Abolition Committee: 'Our scheme of zamindari abolition contemplates payment of equitable compensation. If abolition is held over for a few years, abolition may mean expropriation without compensation and, quite possibly, bloodshed and violence.'<sup>63</sup>

However, even such limited agrarian reform as the abolition of the zamindari system met with fierce resistance from the landlords and circles in government and legislative bodies linked with them. As a result the reform had to go through two basic stages—first, delay in drafting the bill, its passage in the State legislatures and approval by the President, and second, the actual implementation of the law.

The laws to abolish the zamindari system were enacted by the States independently of one another and at different times. However, an approximate chronology can be traced: the first extended from 1947 to 1953; the second from 1953 onward. The drafting of the legislation and enactment of the zamindari abolition laws stretched over many years. To illustrate, the Uttar Pradesh Zamindari Abolition Committee was appointed on 8 August 1946 and it presented its report in October 1948. The bill based on the report was introduced in the State's legislature on 7 July 1949. After the first reading the bill was referred to a select committee which submitted an amended text to the legislature in January

<sup>62</sup> *Abolition of Zamindari System* (Patna, 1946), p. 4 (Citation is from the article 'Congress Betrayal of Bihar Peasantry,' by V. K. P. Rikhi, in *New Age* (December 1953)).

<sup>63</sup> *RUPZAC*, vol. I, p. 358.

1950. It was passed by both houses of the State legislature that year and signed by the President in February 1951, but the law became effective only on 1 July 1952. Thus, it took six years just to work out the legislation and put through the law. And such was the case practically in all States. Those who were opposed to the bill made use of the devices of parliamentary obstruction, common in the West. According to the Press Trust of India the debate on the bill took 63 days, during which 1,450 speeches containing 2,000,000 words were made.<sup>64</sup>

Even after the bills had passed all stages of the complicated legislative procedure the road still was not clear for its enforcement. The zamindars went to the High Court and the Supreme Court, challenging the constitutionality of particular articles or the acts in their entirety. The struggle around the agrarian reform laws is excellently described by Dr. Daniel Thorner:

Once the law has been printed in the *State Gazette*, it may be said to have completed the initial stage in its life cycle, the legislative phase. It now moves into the stage of implementation, which may involve both the executive and the judicial arms of the State government. The most extreme case of the prolongation of this phase occurred in Bihar. After a clouded legislative history stretching through four years, the Bihar Land Reforms Act was published as law late in 1950. But when the State government moved to enforce the Act, the Bihar landlords turned to the courts. First, in a case brought before the High Court of Bihar sitting in Patna they challenged the constitutionality of the law. The landlords' suit was upheld, whereupon the Central Government introduced and the Central Legislature passed a Constitutional Amendment providing specifically for the validation of the Bihar Land Reforms Act. The Bihar landlords then challenged the constitutionality of this amendment in a suit brought before the Supreme Court of India. But this time they lost. Once again the State government started to put the law into practice; and once again the landlords raised in the courts the question of the legality of the Act. For the second time the matter was carried up to the Supreme

<sup>64</sup> *Modern Review* (September 1950), p. 174.

Court of India. As before, the landlords lost it, except for two sub-sections which the Court severed as invalid from the body of the Act.

In 1952 the State authorities for the third time tried to enforce the new law; and the landlords found still another means of blocking the action. They simply refused to hand over to the State their rent rolls and the related village records. Eventually the administrating officers had to reconstruct these documents for themselves. By 1954, when the State was at long last in a position to complete the taking over of the zamindaris, the most recalcitrant of the landlords played yet a final delaying action. Upon being served with formal notices to surrender their estates to the authorities—against compensation to be duly provided—these landlords petitioned the courts on an individual basis to prevent the State government from taking over their estates. Until these court decisions have been rendered (which may be as long as two or three years) the landlords have to be left in possession. Thus, eight years after the Bihar legislature voted its acceptance of the principle of zamindari abolition, the majority of the zamindars of Bihar were in legal possession of their lands.<sup>65</sup>

In 1951, Article 31 of India's Constitution was amended, legalising the acquisition of landholders' estates with compensation. Another amendment to this Article passed in 1955 provided that decisions of the respective legislative bodies fixing the compensation were final and not subject to appeal. However, this did not worry the zamindars in the least. As pointed out in an official publication of the Indian government, 'even the validity of the amendments was questioned.'<sup>66</sup> As was the case in Bihar, the Madhya Bharat jagirdars between 1951 and 1954 presented endless appeals to the High Court and the Supreme Court.<sup>67</sup>

In the course of 1947-52 leaders of the National Congress and representatives of the central and State governments gloomily admitted that the Congress' agrarian pro-

<sup>65</sup> Thorner, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

<sup>66</sup> Government of India, *Progress of Land Reform* (Delhi, 1955), p. 8.

<sup>67</sup> ASI, vol. XII, No. 7 (October 1957), p. 757.

gramme was not being carried out. The Economic Planning Conference of the National Congress held in April 1950 in Delhi, which was attended by chief ministers of the States and the presidents of the provincial Congress committees said in its resolution: 'it is...necessary to shorten the period of transition by expediting the abolition of zamindari and malguzari by paying compensation, if necessary, in bonds.'<sup>68</sup> In a resolution dealing with economic problems adopted at the Nasik session of the AICC in September 1950 it was emphasized again that 'immediate action is necessary more especially in regard to the following matters...Abolition of zamindari, jagirdari and other forms of landlordism'.<sup>69</sup> And the following year, the Delhi session of the AICC held in October again adopted a resolution in which it was stated that the land reforms 'should be extended and completed, as speedily as possible, so that their full benefit reaches the masses'.<sup>70</sup>

However, despite the resolutions, the agrarian reforms were not being implemented at that time in most of the States and the reactionary forces were launching a counter-attack in the countryside. Following its militant activity the government declared the Kisan Sabha illegal, and the landlords in some States tried to suppress the struggle of the peasants by mass terror. The press of those years is literally filled with reports of landlord excesses, in particular, in the former princely states, such as Rajasthan, Saurashtra, Madhya Bharat, and others.<sup>71</sup>

It is perfectly obvious that the attempts to destroy the peasant movement and the delays in implementing the agrarian reforms are the two sides of the same coin.<sup>72</sup> It should also be borne in mind that in the State legislatures, which had been elected during colonial rule, the

<sup>68</sup> *Resolutions on Economic Policy and Programme, 1952-54*, p. 56.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>71</sup> See also: Thorner, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31, 43.

<sup>72</sup> It is interesting to note in this connection that the delays in carrying out the reforms often originated in the Centre. See *Ibid.*

influence of the landlords was very strong. However, as we have stated before, the policy of suppression of the peasant struggle did not yield the results expected by those who were carrying it out. This was strikingly shown by the success of the Left Opposition in the first general elections, held in 1951-52. E. M. S. Namboodiripad stated on one occasion that the upsurge of the mass struggle all over the country forced the ruling circles to begin once more to speak of the agrarian reforms.<sup>73</sup>

The further development of capitalism and the desire of the national bourgeoisie, which had grown strong politically and economically, to accelerate the process gave a spurt to the agrarian reforms. The election manifesto of the National Congress (1952) again underscored that '...the abolition of zamindari, jagirdari and the like must be rapidly completed.<sup>74</sup> In the middle of 1952 Prime Minister Nehru issued a statement in which he said that the Planning Commission was again examining the problem of agrarian reforms in detail.<sup>75</sup> The elaborated programme, which concretized and developed the basic principles in the Congress documents cited above, was incorporated in the First Five Year Plan, which was approved by the Parliament.<sup>76</sup> In the spring of 1953, a special Panel on Land Reforms under the Planning Commission, was appointed to advise on the fulfilment of the programme set forth in the First Five Year Plan.<sup>77</sup>

One after another the States began implementation of the reforms. The process at first was rather slow. In July 1953 the All-India Congress Committee stated in a resolution that 'much yet remains to be done in order to make the actual tillers of the soil the owners of the land.'<sup>78</sup> And exactly a year later, the AICC reiterated that 'the process of eliminating the intermediaries must be completed all over

<sup>73</sup> *Cross Roads*, 24 August 1952.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted from N. Prasada Rao, *Abolition of Landlordism*, p. 14.

<sup>75</sup> See: *Asia*, Vol. VII, No. 4 (July 1952), p. 206.

<sup>76</sup> Government of India, *The First Five Year Plan* (Delhi, 1953).

<sup>77</sup> *ASI*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (May 1953), p. 100.

<sup>78</sup> *Resolutions on Economic Policy and Programme 1952-54*, p. 81.

India without delay.<sup>79</sup> In a resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India in April 1954 it was underscored that 'zamindari abolition acts have not been applied in many States where the old landlordism still remains intact.'<sup>80</sup> Indeed, according to official data, as on March 1954, the reforms had virtually not been implemented in the States of Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan, Assam, West Bengal, Mysore, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi.<sup>81</sup>

A turning point came in 1955-56, due unquestionably to the approaching general elections in the spring of 1957. By the close of 1956 the agrarian reform laws, that is, the zamindari abolition acts, according to some data, had been applied on the great bulk of the land in those areas, namely, 306 million acres. However, the laws had not been given effect on an area of 16,300,000 acres. Moreover, there remained a total area of 11,500,000 acres on which there were zamindari estates and which was not covered by any legislation.<sup>82</sup>

Table 11 (See p. 71) gives a picture of the implementation of the agrarian reform laws by States as at the end of 1956.

Execution of the zamindari abolition acts presupposes, first, formal transfer by zamindars of control over the alienated part of the estate to the State, or, to be more exact, to the land revenue official as its representative; second, the setting up of an agency for the maintenance of up-to-date land records; a cadastral survey in unsurveyed areas and the revision or preparation of a new record-of-rights; the establishment of a new machinery for collecting land revenue. To this should be added the fixing of compensation to be paid to zamindars and its payment.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>80</sup> Communist Party of India, *Our Task Among the Peasant Masses* (Delhi, 1954), p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> ASI, Vol. IX, No. 7 (October 1954), p. 425.

<sup>82</sup> *India, 1958: A Reference Annual*, p. 277. In Rajasthan as of 1 January 1958, only the estates of the jagirdars had been alienated and as regards the zamindars no corresponding legislation had been passed.

TABLE 11

*Data on Agrarian Reforms on Zamindari Lands, 1956*

State	Total area, in million acres	Zamindari	Percentage of area in which			Zamindars still re- mained
			Reform law was passed	Reform im- plemented		
Andhra	40.7	32	24	22	—	10
Assam	54.4	6	3	—	—	3
Bihar	45.0	95	95	94	—	1
Bombay	71.2	18	18	18	—	—
Madhya Pradesh	83.4	62	62	62	—	—
Madras	38.6	20	16	16	—	4
Orissa	38.5	43	43	43	—	—
Punjab	23.9	—	—	—	—	—
Uttar Pradesh	72.6	94	84	84	—	10
West Bengal	19.7	93	93	93	—	—
Hyderabad	52.6	42	42	42	—	—
Madhya Bharat	29.6	58	57	57	—	1
Mysore	21.3	6	6	—	—	6
Rajasthan	88.3	58	56	45	—	13
Saurashtra	13.6	37	37	37	—	—
Cutch	10.9	33	—	—	—	33
Vindhya Pradesh	15.1	38	38	38	—	—

Inasmuch as zamindari abolition acts are being carried out by revenue departments of the State governments, the conferring of ownership rights on tenants, determination of exact amount of the lands left with the zamindars, fixing the amounts of compensation to be paid, and the introduction of new land revenue rates wherever required by the law—all necessitate revision of the record-of-rights or preparation of a new one. As justly noted by Professor Priya Ranjan Sen, 'it has to be recognized that a final publication of the record-of-rights is a *sine qua non* before the act could be brought into force in any particular locality.'<sup>83</sup>

In the temporarily settled estates, records-of-rights were, according to the Panel on Land Reforms, in a relatively satisfactory state.<sup>84</sup> But it was otherwise in the permanently settled estates and jagirdari and such areas in former princely states. In Bihar, for instance, the situation was as follows:

Revenue village agencies had to be built up from scratch....The outgoing intermediaries did not hand over the full papers available with them or they did not themselves have full details of their intermediary interests. The survey and settlement operations were also conducted many years ago. The latest records are nearly 30 years old and the oldest, relating to certain districts of the State, are over 50 years ....Prior to the introduction of zamindari abolition scheme, this State had no revenue machinery in rural areas except in the few government estates.<sup>85</sup>

Formal 'acquisition' of a zamindar's estate by a notification in a local Government Gazette by no means, therefore, signified actual 'abolition of an intermediary.' In West Bengal zamindars' landowning interests have been vested in the State since 14 April 1955, but, as stated in the *Review of the First Five Year Plan*, preparation of a new land record was expected to be completed there only in 1958.<sup>86</sup> A similar situation existed in other States, too. In Orissa, for example, according to Table 11 given earlier, the Zamindari Abolition Act was put into effect. But the Orissa Land Reform Committee, 1958, states:

In many of the ex-state areas the existing land records have reached a stage when it is not possible to effect any further changes. Many complications have arisen on account of non-maintenance of up-to-date land records. Considerable difficulties have cropped up in the implementation of the Orissa Estates Abolition Act on this score. Survey and settlement operations have, of course,

<sup>84</sup> Reports of the Committees of the Panel on Land Reforms, p. 19.

<sup>85</sup> Government of Bihar, *Memorandum on Land Tenure System in Bihar and Measures Taken in the State for Abolition of Zamindaris* (Patna, 1956), p. 20.

<sup>86</sup> *Review of the First Five Year Plan*, p. 317.

been taken up in some parts of the State. But this will necessarily take time and involve heavy expenditure. The revenue records that have been maintained do not give up-to-date information in respect of the holdings of tenants and cropsharers.<sup>87</sup>

Under these conditions the implementation of land legislation dragged on for years. Thus, in Madras, while the first estates came under the control of the State as early as 1949, in 1953-54 estates taken over and in which survey operations have been completed comprised only 815,421 acres (roughly 18 per cent of the total areas of estates).<sup>88</sup>

By now survey and settlement operations have been completed in most States, but in some places, such as in some of the districts in Assam, the operations were still going on early in 1961.<sup>89</sup> It appears that completion of the preparation of a new record-of-rights does not always mean the institution of a new system of land assessment. While travelling in Bihar early in 1961, the author found that although, according to official publications, revision of land records had been completed there in the main by the end of the First Five Year Plan period, in Patna and Hazaribag districts zamindars with whom the author had occasion to talk were not yet paying any land revenue on the land left in their possession.

A very important fact that must be underscored is that in zamindari areas, most of the staff of the reorganized revenue office was made up of the old rent collecting agents of the zamindars. During the author's visit of the 24-Parganas District (West Bengal) in 1957 and 1961, peasants with whom he talked told him that in the main the same persons collected revenue who had collected it under the zamindars. A ryot in the village of Humaipur said that all that the government did was to transfer revenue collectors

<sup>87</sup> Government of Orissa, *Report of the Land Reforms Committee*, (1958), p. 42.

<sup>88</sup> Government of Madras, *Report on the Settlement of the Land Revenue in the Estates Taken Over and Not Taken Over under Act XXVI of 1948 in Madras State for Fasli 1363 (1953-1954)* (Madras, 1957), p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> India, 1961: *A Reference Annual*, p. 261.

from some estates to others, and he added that some were using pressure on the peasants in an attempt to collect additional charges as before. Dr. Sulekh Chandra Gupta of the Delhi School of Economics came across the same sort of thing. In the report of an economic survey conducted by him in 1955-56 in the village of Shamaspur (Uttar Pradesh) he wrote:

It appears that the reason for raising the rent was the attitude of the patwari towards the tenants. In this village, the patwari was not particularly honest and it was reported that when the villagers refused to bribe him, invariably the consequence was the raising of rent. No case of eviction was recorded. In one case, it was reported that the patwari was trying to evict the tenants.<sup>90</sup>

As has been stated earlier, in a number of places zamindar-landlords, undertaking wholesale eviction of tenants, made use of the help of local land revenue officials. It is indicative that the Panel on Land Reforms during their visit to the Purnea District in Bihar also came across cases of zamindars attempting to enlarge their sirs in the course of preparation of the land record.<sup>91</sup>

The implementation of the agrarian reforms through the revenue office set up during British rule and keeping out those who were most concerned in carrying them out fully, namely, the peasants, resulted not only in the suffering of the tillers of the soil and their mass-scale evictions, but also in the dragging of the abolition of the zamindari system for more than a decade.

More than 14 years have passed since the first laws for the abolition of 'intermediaries' were begun to be worked out, and though in most of the country the legislation has been put into effect, in some States even at the beginning of 1961 zamindar-type landlords still carried on. In most States the different kinds of inams had not been abo-

<sup>90</sup> S. C. Gupta, *An Economic Survey of Shamaspur Village* (District Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh): A Case Study in the Structure and Functioning of A Village Economy (New Delhi, 1959), p. 94.

<sup>91</sup> AICC Economic Review (11 February 1956), pp. 30-41.

lished; in some districts of Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan zamindari abolition was not yet completed, and in the States of Himachal Pradesh and Tripura legislation on the subject was only then being enacted.<sup>92</sup> It must be noted that inamdar and some zamindars continue to resist the agrarian reforms. Here, for instance, is a dispatch from Gujarat which appeared in the *Times of India*:

The Kutch Rajput Sabha has announced its plans to lead a march to the Assembly Hall at Ahmedabad to protest against the implementation of the Kutch Inam Abolition Act in Kutch areas.<sup>93</sup>

In a government publication we read that in Bihar intermediaries' rights had been acquired 'except in a few estates which could not be taken over due to legal difficulties'<sup>94</sup> (author's emphasis).

Especially successful have been the inamdar in Madras State. Although the question of abolishing every kind of inam was discussed in the Legislative Assembly as far back as 1948, the temples and some private individuals to this day continue to hold tens of thousands of acres of lands on inam conditions. Moreover, temples receiving generous financial assistance from the State keep increasing their holdings through 'gifts' of plots of land, sometimes fairly large ones.<sup>95</sup> Yet, with acute land-hunger in South India we find large uncultivated plots all over. The *Report of the Committee on Agricultural Production* (Madras, 1959) says:

Large blocks of these lands are lying undeveloped and fallow, particularly in the Ramanathapuram and Tanjore districts, and that even those lands which are under cultivation have not been put to the best possible use.... It is understood that there is an estimated extent of one lakh acres of lands belonging to Hindu religious and

<sup>92</sup> *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, pp. 261-62.

<sup>93</sup> *The Times of India*, 11 February 1961.

<sup>94</sup> *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, p. 261.

<sup>95</sup> Government of Madras, *Administration Report of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments 1955-56* (Madras, 1957), pp. 85-95.

charitable institutions which still remain to be developed in the Tanjore District alone.<sup>96</sup>

According to the same Report, peasants are still being exploited on temple lands in feudal fashion by means of the intermediary lessee system.<sup>97</sup>

We may say, however, that by the end of the Second Five Year Plan period zamindari abolition, the first stage of the land reform, was completed.

What are the principal socio-economic and political results of this agrarian legislation? Limited as it is, its progressive importance from the standpoint of history lies in the fact that it has certainly led to a considerable curbing of feudal and semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry. We cannot but concur with Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri's statement in his *Report on the Progress of Land Reforms in India* submitted to the Trichur Silver Jubilee Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha (1961) that 'these legislation have considerably curbed the power of the old type feudal oppression of peasants.'<sup>98</sup>

As has been shown above, the economic position of the zamindar landlords has been considerably weakened in consequence of the reforms. Although they remain a part of the landlord class of India, the zamindars no longer play their former role in the country's political life. To offset, partly at least, the loss of their old privileges and influence many ex-zamindars and even ex-rulers joined local Congress organizations, particularly in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and this, among other things, strengthened the Rightwing of the ruling party.

At the same time, ex-zamindars in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other ex-zamindari areas are owners of the biggest holdings. In addition, they possess large amounts of money, which they use extensively for moneylending operations.

<sup>96</sup> Government of Madras, *Report of the Committee on Agricultural Production* (Madras, May 1959), p. 55.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>98</sup> Eighteenth Session of All-India Kisan Sabha (1961 New Delhi), pp. 37-38.

Tradition and in particular the fact that zamindars, as a rule, belonged to the Brahmin or other upper castes have favoured the continuation of their influence in the countryside. There is no disputing the fact that in the localities where their holdings lie they continue to dominate the economic and political life. Here is an illustration. During his journey through Bihar the author visited an ex-zamindar in Patna district. Owner of 66 acres of land (roughly a fifth of his former holdings) he was at the same time proprietor of a rice mill, which brought him an income of some Rs 10,000 a year; he owned real property in Patna City, had deposits in the bank, lent out money (one of the loans being for Rs 24,000 for which he received as security a mortgage on 10 acres of land). This zamindar, who adapted himself rather well to the new conditions, was a local leader—the president of panchayat and of a multipurpose cooperative society.

The preservation of the zamindars as a part of the landlord class inevitably entails continued feudal oppression of the peasantry. Attesting to this are the data on leased out land by owners of the larger holdings in the States in which the zamindari system prevailed earlier. The data for 1953-54 for North India (Uttar Pradesh) and East India (Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Manipur and Tripura) are given in Table 12 (see p. 72).

It should be stated, however, that in truth the percentage of households leasing out land and in particular the percentage of land leased out by the upper groups of landholders is actually higher. In the first place, the data in the table cover only the rural sector, with the holdings of absentee landlords living in towns not taken into account and, in the second place, hidden tenancy in the shape of cropsharing has not been taken into account, in particular for Uttar Pradesh. However, even these data show that the bulk of owners of large holdings continue to make use of the old semi-feudal methods of exploitation of the direct producers.

Along with leasing out land, zamindars cultivate some of the land left them by using hired labour. That, however, must not be attributed mainly to the reform. The zamin-

TABLE 12

## Data on Rural Land Leased Out by Households

Acreage of house-hold land	% of lessor households		% of area leased out	
	North India	East India	North India	East India
40 — 49.99	57.89	55.56	10.41	19.19
50 — 74.99	40.00	36.36	7.30	17.96
75 — 99.99	50.00	100.00	22.71	41.46
100—249.99	66.67	100.00	14.48	31.23
250—499.99	—	100.00	—	14.58
500 and ovr	—	0.00	—	52.29
Average for all households	9.78	11.16	5.84	9.90

Source: *The National Sample Survey. 8th Round: July 1954-April 1955. Number 36: Report on Land Holdings (3) (Some Aspects of Ownership Holdings)*, Delhi, 1961. pp. 100, 101, Tables 44, 45.

dari abolition acts have not *per se* spurred landlords sufficiently to run their farms on a capitalist basis. True, the agrarian reform laws contained a proviso which excluded capitalist-type landlord farms and plantations from the purview of reform. As we have pointed out earlier, capitalist-type landlord farms in zamindari areas covered a relatively small area. As regards tea, coffee and rubber plantations, the total area in 1953-55 was less than 1.5 million acres out of 370 million under cultivation.<sup>99</sup> Extension by zamindars of sir lands through the eviction of tenants did not, as a rule, lead to setting up large landlord farms; on the contrary, many zamindars who tried to establish capitalist farms on the land retained by them under the reform went bankrupt.<sup>100</sup> H. D. Malaviya stated in an article in the AICC Economic Review that in Uttar Pradesh over 500

<sup>99</sup> Calculated from data contained in: Government of India, *Report of the Plantation Inquiry Commission*, vol. I-III (Delhi).

<sup>100</sup> It is indicative that in 1955 a law was enacted in Bihar providing for compulsory leasing out idle sir lands from which zamindars had evicted tenants [ASI, Vol. X, No. 8 (November 1955), p. 605].

farms of ex-zamindars with a combined area of 200,000 acres were offered for sale.<sup>101</sup>

Yet the economic purport of leaving landlords part of their holdings under the reform was precisely that it should serve as a foundation for establishing later a large-scale capitalist farm.

This objective—to accelerate the process of semi-feudal landholders (and not ex-zamindars alone) turning to capitalist farming—was also the aim in passing other legislation, which will be dealt with below. But a good part of home farms of ex-zamindars existed even before zamindari abolition. In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, in 1945–46, 60 lakhs acres out of the total 71 lakhs of zamindars' sir and khudkasht lands were in their own possession.<sup>102</sup>

These are the main changes that have occurred in the economic and political position of the landlord class under the impact of the implementation of the zamindari abolition acts.

As far as the peasantry is concerned, these laws, as we have indicated above, conferred security of tenure upon the chief tenants. In the Report of Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri quoted earlier, he justly stated that 'these legislation have benefited the tenants to the extent their social and legal status is enhanced. The richer sections of the tenants have acquired full ownership rights and have been able to improve their lands and develop their agriculture also to some extent'.<sup>103</sup> The change in the condition of the upper crust of the tenants who acquired ownership rights, is the principal socio-economic and political consequence of zamindari abolition.

As shown by the data of the National Sample Survey, Census of Holdings, and also sample surveys conducted at various times in villages in the ex-zamindari areas in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal and Orissa,

<sup>101</sup>H. D. Malaviya, 'Depressing Effects of Incomplete Land Reforms and Price Instability on National Output.' *AICC Economic Review* (1 July 1957), p. 15.

<sup>102</sup>RUPZAC, Vol. II, p. 4.

<sup>103</sup>*Eighteenth Session of All-India Kisan Sabha*, p. 37.

there was striking inequality of property among occupancy ryots. By the time the agrarian legislation was being enacted a small upper crust had emerged from among them, which generally belonged to the upper castes and in whose hands was concentrated a good part of the land under cultivation.

Highly interesting in this respect are the materials on settlement of land revenue in the zamindari estates in Madras State which have been taken over and surveyed prior to 1953-54. Bigger pattadars (including single holders of joint pattas) paying land revenue of over Rs 50 made up 8 per cent of the total number of pattadars, but they held roughly 20 per cent of the total assessed lands.<sup>104</sup>

Since the implementation of agrarian legislation this upper stratum of the peasantry have become, along with the ex-zamindars, the chief lessors of land and employers of agricultural labourers. Their influence has grown in particular in the villages where there are no sir lands of ex-zamindars. It is this upper stratum which now fills the 'power vacuum caused by abolition of zamindari'.<sup>105</sup>

Before the reforms, this stratum of tenants energetically advocated abolition of the zamindari system; it played an important role in the peasant movement, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madras (including Andhra), and West Bengal. After the reforms were put through it withdrew from active peasant movement. The sirdars and bhumidhars who continue to lease out land have essentially become small semi-feudal landlords. It is noteworthy that in Uttar Pradesh preservation of this form of exploitation was envisaged in the shape of sajehdari (cropsharing), which under the agrarian reform law is not deemed to be a variety of lease. The rich peasants have consolidated their position as landholders, and with the steady expansion of the home market and supply of labour power, they now have more

<sup>104</sup> Computed from data published in *Report of the Settlement of the Land Revenue in the Estates*, pp. 141-47.

<sup>105</sup> Baljit Singh, *Next Step in Village India: A Study of Land Reforms and Group Dynamics* (Bombay—New Delhi, 1961), p. 54.

favourable opportunities for accumulating money and extending their farms.

Without at this time going into detail over this question we want to indicate the main trend in the changing line-up of the class forces in ex-zamindari areas in the reform period: the growing identity of interests between the peasant upper stratum and residential ex-zamindars and the aggravation of the class contradictions between these groups and the mass of village poor. Research workers trying to analyze the social and economic processes going on in the Indian countryside could not help noting this fact. H. D. Malaviya makes interesting observations in respect of Uttar Pradesh as also Dr Daniel Thorner and Dr Baljit Singh.<sup>106</sup> We also know from published material that a similar trend has been observed also in the more developed districts of Andhra Pradesh.<sup>107</sup>

It is a pleasure to quote another excellent passage from Dr Thorner's work in which he gives a masterly picture of the class antagonisms in the countryside in the reform period.

Within this group or class of maliks [he wrote] it is possible to separate out two subgroups. One consists of large absentee landlords who typically have holdings in more than one village. The second consists of smaller proprietors who reside personally in the village in which they own land, and usually exercise some degree of management and control over its cultivation. It must be emphasized that the distinction here is not one of formal tenure. Either of these two types of proprietor may have the highest type of property rights. Either may be an occupancy tenant. Both have the same basic economic interest in keeping up the level of rent payable to them by lessor tenants, subtenants, or croppers; and keeping down the level of the wages of farm servants and other field labourers. For it is the maliks, large and small, who

<sup>106</sup> See H. D. Malaviya, 'Land Reforms in India: Present Phase', *AICC Economic Review*, vol. VII, No. 8 (1 June 1955), p. 14; Daniel Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India*, p. 50; Baljit Singh, *Next Step in Village India*, Chapters III and IV.

<sup>107</sup> See K. Satyanarayana, 'Developments in Agriculture in the Andhra Region,' *New Age*, Vol. X, No. 1 (January, 1961).

are the receivers of rural rent and the chief employers of rural labour.<sup>108</sup>

Implementation of the zamindari abolition acts has thus led to a change in the structure of the dominant social stratum in ex-zamindari areas. While in general the position of the feudal landlords—the zamindars—has weakened, they have retained their position as the largest landowners in those States. However, side by side with the ex-zamindars, in particular the small and middle resident landlords, the upper crust of the chief tenants began to play an ever greater role in the economic and political life of the village.

But, as we have attempted to show earlier, the condition of the bulk of the peasantry—the actual tillers of the soil—has remained practically unchanged. Nor did the land legislation apply to the larger part of the country's territory. And as a result, by the end of the First Five Year Plan period, 10 years after winning independence, the land problem remained for the Indian peasantry as acute as before.

There was a temporary decline of the organized peasant movement in 1955-58, the main reason for which, in our view, was that the peasant organizations were unable to adapt themselves to the new situation in the countryside resulting from the change in the alignment of the class forces after the reform. Notwithstanding this decline the class contradictions in the rural areas have been growing sharper.

That was the political aspect of the need for putting through the next round of land reform measures.

Besides, zamindari abolition acts, as has been stated before, did not *per se* stimulate an upsurge in agricultural production and expansion of the internal market. Furthermore, even after the abolition of the zamindari system, a good part of the land in the ex-zamindari areas, as can be seen from Table 12, was being leased out on a feudal or semi-feudal basis as before, and hence, economic requirements were the second aspect of the reason for the second

<sup>108</sup> Daniel Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India*, p. 5.

- round of land legislation—imposition of ceiling on landholdings.

### *Imposition of Ceiling on Landholdings*

Even before India gained her independence, the principle of limiting private landholding had been advanced by the All-India Kisan Sabha. It was incorporated in the 'Charter of Kisan Demands,' adopted by the Central Kisan Council at its Calcutta session held on 26 November 1946, which read, in part, as follows: 'The existing landholders, both in zamindari and ryotwari areas, shall be allowed to possess land for self-cultivation only up to the maximum limit of 25 acres per landholder.'<sup>109</sup>

Later, the question of a ceiling on landholdings was considered by the All-India Kisan Sabha as part of the general problem of eradication of the remnants of feudal relations and complete abolition of landlord landholding, to be followed by redistribution of the land among the peasants.

The problem of imposition of a ceiling on landholdings was treated also in the programme documents of the Indian National Congress.

Already the economic programme documents of 1947 and 1948 cited earlier pointed to the need of fixing the maximum amount of land a private person could hold. However, during the first six years of independence this question appeared to have been pushed into the background by the reform of the zamindari system. That is why on the question of ceiling, the First Five Year Plan contained only a general and vague recommendation: 'We are...in favour of the principle that there should be an upper limit to the amount of land that any individual may hold'.<sup>110</sup>

In 1953, the question of a ceiling on landholding was again put forward as one of the chief objectives of the

<sup>109</sup> Quoted from N. Prasada Rao's booklet: *Congress Agrarian Reforms: Gaps and Loopholes* (New Delhi, February 1959), p. 13.

<sup>110</sup> *The First Five Year Plan*, p. 168.

government's agrarian policy. The resolution adopted by the Agra session of the AICC in the summer of that year contained the following: 'The State governments should take immediate steps in regard to the collection of the requisite land data and the fixation of ceilings on landholdings, with a view to redistribute the land, as far as possible, among landless workers'.<sup>111</sup> This resolution was confirmed in a special resolution adopted by the Congress Working Committee in May 1954.

The urgency of new agrarian legislation was reiterated in a resolution on land reforms adopted at the July 1954 session of the AICC held in Ajmer. It read in part: 'While in a large number of States intermediaries have been eliminated, this has not necessarily resulted in the tiller owning the land'.<sup>112</sup>

A Census of Landholdings by States taken in 1954-55 showed immense concentration of landownership, on the whole coinciding with the data of the 8th Round of the National Sample Survey, 1953-54. At the same time government commissions were set up in some States to draw up recommendations for new land legislation.

The question of a ceiling on landholdings gave rise to far greater disagreement in the ruling circles and in the Congress Party, firstly, because a ceiling affected the entire landlord class and not only the zamindars; secondly, this measure applied not only to feudal and semi-feudal landed proprietors, but to big landholders in general, including those of the capitalist type, and thirdly, with considerable concentration of land in many villages in the hands of the upper stratum of the peasantry, there was genuine fear among the latter that their interests, too, might be affected.

The ceiling principle evoked vigorous opposition in the State legislatures. For instance, the Land Reforms Committee in Andhra, in its report dated October 1955, came out flatly against any limitation of the existing landholdings.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> *Resolutions on Economic Policy and Programme, 1952-54*, p. 81.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>113</sup> Government of Andhra, *Report of the Land Reforms Committee, Andhra (Kurnool)*, pp. 49-51.

And in the States where limitation of the extent of land that could be held by an individual was approved in principle, the ceiling recommended in the reports of the government committees was such as would have affected only an insignificant group of the biggest landowners.

<sup>114</sup> Thus, the Madhya Pradesh Land Reforms Committee recommended in September 1955 the fixation of ceiling at 50 acres for every member of a landowner's family.<sup>114</sup> If this principle were applied, the redistribution of the land would have become a farce, as even the biggest landowners could have recorded the land in the name of relatives. It is significant that in Madhya Pradesh, in 1954-55, holdings under 10 acres made up 78.3 per cent and constituted 29.8 per cent of the total land, and holdings over 30 acres constituted 4.6 per cent and amounted to 36.5 per cent of the total.<sup>115</sup> In Bihar the ceiling bill provided for an upper limit of 25 to 150 acres.<sup>116</sup>

The struggle around further agrarian reforms continued in the Congress leadership, Parliament and government. This is reflected in the resolutions on economic problems adopted at the annual sessions of the Congress in Avadi in 1955 and Amritsar in 1956. While both resolutions underscored the need for carrying out agrarian reforms as early as possible, no concrete programme of any kind was set forth in either.<sup>117</sup>

However, with the general elections of 1957 drawing near and the need of drafting directives for the Second Five Year Plan, the more farsighted of the Congress leaders became more active.

Of great importance for formulating the agrarian programme in the Second Five Year Plan were the Reports of the Panel on Land Reforms prepared in the spring of 1956. These documents contained a fairly complete and objective

<sup>114</sup> Report of the Land Reforms Committee (Nagpur, 1955), p. 37.

<sup>115</sup> Second Five Year Plan, p. 214.

<sup>116</sup> Memorandum on Land Tenure System in Bihar, p. 38.

<sup>117</sup> Resolutions on Economic Policy and Programmes, 1955-1956 (New Delhi, All-India Congress Committee, 1956), pp. 4, 10.

picture of the implementation of the legislation covering zamindari abolition and tenancy and also quite specific recommendations in regard to the ceiling on landholdings and development of agricultural producers' cooperatives.

Radical measures were recommended in the *Memorandum on Land Policy* submitted by Dr K. S. Gill of the Punjab University to the Plan Forum session held in Delhi in April 1956.<sup>118</sup> He presented a plan for giving effect to the slogan of 'Land to the Tiller' by the end of 1960 through redistributing the land radically but not on a levelling principle. He proposed that the agrarian reforms shall be carried out in the villages by special 'Committees of the Tillers of the Soil' to be guided by the general principles worked out by the special Land Reforms Commissions in each State.

While the Praja Socialist Party criticized the agrarian policy of the ruling party, it did not advance an agrarian programme of its own different from the Congress programme. The Second National Conference of this party, held in 1956, stated in its resolutions that the party stood for halting the eviction of tenants, for distribution of waste land, and for higher prices of farm produce and so on. But as regards the main questions of agrarian policy the Praja Socialists confined themselves to vague statements on the need of 'redistribution of land' and of encouraging the development of the cooperative movement.<sup>119</sup>

The explanation why the Praja Socialist Party has no agrarian programme different from that of the ruling Congress Party is that these parties are akin to one another in their social character.

A sharpening of the struggle on the question of agrarian reforms became apparent during the debate in Parliament on the Second Five Year Plan. At the meetings of Committee 'C' on Second Five Year Plan appointed by the two Houses of Parliament to consider the sections of the Plan

<sup>118</sup> See: K. S. Gill, *Memorandum on Land Policy, Submitted to the National Plan Forum*, Delhi, 14-15 April 1956.

<sup>119</sup> Report of the Second National Conference of the Praja Socialist Party, 26-30 December 1955, p. 145.

covering agriculture and agrarian reforms, a heated discussion developed. Many members belonging to the parties of the Right and even Congress members spoke against the recommendations of the Planning Commission for a ceiling on landholdings and perspective of peasant producers' co-operatives.<sup>120</sup> While the communist and Congress Left-wing members of the committee criticized the government's agrarian policy, they supported the progressive part of the programme set forth in the draft directives for the Second Five Year Plan.

The reactionaries did not succeed in changing the Nehru government's agrarian policy. In the directives passed by Parliament and published towards the close of 1956, the lines set forth in the earlier official documents of the government and Congress were developed and concretized. Along with the need of the most expeditious and complete implementation of zamindari abolition and tenancy legislation, special stress was laid on working out and putting into effect by States of laws fixing a ceiling on landholdings.

In the Congress Election Manifesto of 1957, too, it was emphasized that 'the principle of ceilings on land has been accepted and should be progressively introduced, so as to bring about a better distribution of land.'<sup>121</sup>

In contrast to the other parties, the Communist Party of India not only set forth in its Election Manifesto a programme for settling without delay the agrarian question and its central problem—the abolition of landlordism without compensation—but underscored the need of carrying out the agrarian reforms not through bureaucratic machinery, but through 'democratically elected agricultural labourers' and peasants' committees'.<sup>122</sup>

Following the elections, more and more voices began to

<sup>120</sup> Committee 'C' on Second Five Year Plan, *Synopsis of Proceedings*, 8th to 13th July 1956 (New Delhi, 1956).

<sup>121</sup> Indian National Congress: *Election Manifesto* (1957), p. 12.

<sup>122</sup> *Election Manifesto of the Communist Party of India* (New Delhi, 1957), p. 33.

be heard within the National Congress demanding that the implementation of the party's programme should be proceeded with.

At meetings of the AICC and the Congress Working Committee held in New Delhi in late August and early September 1957, many of those who attended expressed great dissatisfaction with, and concern about, the unsatisfactory state of implementation of the proclaimed agrarian reforms. It was resolved that 'effective steps should be taken immediately for providing security of tenure to the tillers of the soil as recommended in the Second Plan...Ceilings on future acquisitions of land should be imposed in all the States without any further delay. Ceilings on existing holdings should also be introduced'.<sup>123</sup>

The Standing Committee of the National Development Council at its session held two weeks later adopted a decision to complete the imposition of a ceiling in the States where such legislation had been passed, by the end of 1960, and that the other States should pass legislation imposing a ceiling in the course of 1958-59.<sup>124</sup>

Earlier, in the autumn of 1956, there was published in Delhi the *Report of the Indian Delegation to China on Agricultural Planning and Techniques*, and in May 1957 the *Report of the Indian Delegation to China on Agrarian Cooperatives*. Both delegations in general highly praised China's achievements and insistently recommended that a study be made of the experience of the socio-economic reorganization of the Chinese countryside.

The publication of the two reports, in particular the latter, evoked a sharp reaction from the Rightist circles, and even on the pages of *AICC Economic Review*, the official organ of the Congress, articles appeared in 1957-58 criticizing the basic conclusions of the 1957 report.

All through the following year, 1958, the bourgeois press of the Right, and especially that part which represented the interests of India's monopoly capital, carried on a

<sup>123</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, 1957, No. 9, p. 353.

<sup>124</sup> *ASI*, Vol. XIII, No. 7 (October 1957), p. 759.

furious campaign against the idea of a ceiling on landholding.

In some circles the trend towards cutting short the agrarian reforms was gaining strength. The press carried articles which propagated that the thing to be stressed was not so much agrarian legislation as improvement of the agro-technical level of farmings. This trend to substitute a complex of agro-technical measures for agrarian reform manifested itself also at the meeting of the AICC in October 1958. During the debate on the agrarian question some prominent Congress leaders, as, for instance, Harekrushna Mahtab and Mahavir Tyagi, openly spoke against the imposition of a ceiling.<sup>125</sup> Interesting in this respect was the speech of Ajit Prasad Jain, who stated that 'though redistribution of land was necessary, it was not this redistribution that had become the problem...the size of the farm was not of very vital importance. It was the method of farming which was important.'<sup>126</sup>

The result was that no common formula for going on with implementation of land reforms was found at that meeting of the AICC and a special subcommittee, headed by C. Subramaniam, was appointed to study the question further. Significantly, the new body set up was called the Subcommittee on Agricultural Production, and not on land reforms.

Although the National Development Council passed a resolution as far back as 1957 that it was necessary to speed up legislation by the States for a ceiling, by the middle of 1958 only six States (West Bengal, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Pepsu, Himachal Pradesh and Hyderabad) had set upper limits on existing holdings.<sup>127</sup>

A new stage in the struggle around ceiling legislation began with the adoption of a resolution on the agrarian question by the Nagpur Session of the Indian National Congress in January 1959; the resolution was based on the recommendations of the Subcommittee for Agricultural Production.

<sup>125</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, 1958, No 10-11, pp. 512-20.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 515-16.

<sup>127</sup> *AICC Economic Review*, vol. X, No. 7 (15 August 1958), pp. 13-14.

The political aspect predominated in the resolution. As we have tried to show earlier, the main question, that of the land, remained unsolved and the economic condition of the peasants remained virtually unchanged at the end of the first two Five Year Plans. Sadiq Ali, the then AICC General Secretary, wrote in 1959: 'Many reforms have been accomplished in the agrarian economy of India since India attained independence and yet in their total result did not seem to amount to much unless other radical measures followed.'<sup>128</sup> Under these conditions the further development of the class struggle in the countryside made it necessary to initiate a new stage in the reform of the system of landholding. Sunil Guha, the then editor of the AICC *Economic Review*, stated frankly that 'the imposition of a ceiling on existing landholdings would not, of course, release much surplus land. But the psychological gain from the measure would be immense. It would relieve tension among the landless millions and engender a sense of contentment.'<sup>129</sup>

Paragraph 3 of the resolution on 'Agrarian Organizational Pattern' says: 'In order to remove uncertainty regarding land reforms and give stability to the farmer, ceiling should be fixed on existing and future holdings and legislation to this effect, as well as for the abolition of intermediaries, should be completed in all States by the end of 1959.'<sup>130</sup> This general directive was passed not without a struggle in the leading bodies of the Congress.

At the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee and its Subjects Committee in Nagpur on 7-9 January 1959, some prominent Congressmen, mainly from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, opposed ceiling.<sup>131</sup> Koti Reddi from Andhra Pradesh presented an unofficial resolution calling for a halt to ceiling legislation.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>128</sup> AICC *Economic Review*, vol. X, No. 19 (1 February 1959), p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., No. 23 (1 April 1959), p. 28.

<sup>130</sup> AICC *Economic Review*, vol. X, No. 19, p. 37.

<sup>131</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, 1959, No. 1 & 2, pp. 27-33, 49-61.

<sup>132</sup> *Link*, vol. I, No. 2 (4 January 1959), p. 11.

However, on 10 January when the resolution was put up for debate at the plenary meeting of the Congress no representative of the Right spoke against it and it was adopted unanimously.<sup>133</sup> The Congress Rightwing knew that they would have their revenge in the States' legislatures, which were to give practical effect to the resolution.

Banarasi Das Gupta, a delegate to the Congress session, said bluntly in this connection that in the Congress 'usually the practice had been that they passed resolutions and made no effort to implement them.'<sup>134</sup> Another delegate, C. M. Stephen, emphasized in his speech at a meeting of the Editorial Committee that besides passing legislation for a ceiling it was necessary to implement them promptly, before the end of 1959.<sup>135</sup> These fears were justified.

In February and March 1959, shortly after the Nagpur session of Congress, the spring sessions of the State legislative assemblies began, but there was no sign of the State governments hastening to put the Nagpur resolution on the agrarian question into effect.

The usually well-informed weekly *Link* reported that the very first days of work of the legislative assemblies of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab and Rajasthan revealed a tendency to delay in every possible way the imposition of an upper limit on landholdings.<sup>136</sup> Most striking was the picture in Uttar Pradesh where, as reported by *Link*, during the three-day debate on agrarian relations in the legislative assembly, 12 of the 19 Congressmen who took the floor did not utter a single word on the Nagpur resolution.<sup>137</sup> At the May 1959 meeting of the All-India Congress Committee N. R. S. Reddi, a member from Mysore State, again spoke against a ceiling.<sup>138</sup>

Simultaneously with opposition in the Congress to a ceiling and to producers' cooperatives in the countryside, the

<sup>133</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, 1959, No. 1 & 2, pp. 86-93.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>136</sup> See: *Link*, Vol. I, No. 24, 26, 28-30 (January-March 1959).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, No. 30 (1959), p. 12.

<sup>138</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, 1959, No. 4-5, p. 246.

different organizations representing the interests of the landlords and rich peasants, such as the Farmers' Forum and others, began to rally their forces. These semi-official organizations reacted unfavourably to the resolution of the Nagpur session of Congress.<sup>139</sup>

In Rajasthan and Assam the local landowners set up a special organization to oppose agrarian reforms.<sup>140</sup> The activity of the opponents of further land reforms gained new impetus and an organizing centre, following the founding of the reactionary Swatantra Party in the summer of 1959. This party promptly received extensive support from the big capitalists, the former rulers, zamindars, and communal reaction.

The struggle around the agrarian question occupied an important place in the programme of counterattack indicated by the reactionaries.

Already in December 1958, N. G. Ranga, one of the present leaders of Swatantra and the then Secretary of Congress Parliamentary Party, came out sharply at the conference of Bharat Kisan Convention (the landlords-employers organization) in Delhi over which he presided, against the idea of a ceiling and of producers' cooperatives in the countryside. On 23 December he sent to Nehru a letter signed by 100 Congress Members of Parliament, in which they flayed the idea of a ceiling on landholdings.<sup>141</sup>

On 31 January 1959, Ranga sharply attacked the Nagpur resolution at a meeting of the landlords and rich farmers' organization, the Punjab Farmers' Convention, over which he presided together with another 'kisan', the Maharaja of Darbhanga.<sup>142</sup>

On 16 February he officially resigned from the Congress Party, and at one of his first press conferences he stated that the founding of the Swatantra Party had been hastened

<sup>139</sup> *Link*, Vol. I, No. 23 (18 January 1959), p. 4.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, (1 January 1959), p. 16; (22 February 1959), p. 28.

<sup>141</sup> *Why Ranga Resigns?* (Nidubrolu, 1959), pp. 77-82.

<sup>142</sup> *Link*, Vol. I, No. 26 (8 February 1959), p. 8.

by the adoption of the Nagpur resolution.<sup>143</sup>

The Swatantra Party stands for discontinuation of land reform programmes.

A fine illustration is the reaction of local leaders of this party to the Maharashtra Land Ceiling Bill gazetted at the beginning of January 1961, which, as we shall try to show later, does not at all abolish landlordism. According to the *Hindustan Times*, Murarji Vaidya, chairman of the Bombay Swatantra Party Organizing Committee, 'characterized the bill as theoretically unsound, economically disruptive and politically provocative'.<sup>144</sup>

The mounting struggle within the bourgeoisie on the agrarian reforms is a part of the deeper disagreements on the country's home and foreign policy as a whole. A section of the national bourgeoisie, headed by its upper crust of monopolists, has now definitely set out to pursue a policy of unrestricted development of the private capitalist sector in every sphere of the national economy. This section of the bourgeoisie is linked very closely with the big money-lenders, traders, and foreign capitalists in India. The class of landlords is its natural ally.

It is no coincidence, therefore, that the organization of Indian capitalists, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries in a special pamphlet dealing with the draft of the Third Five Year Plan, sharply attacked the agrarian reforms outlined in the Nagpur resolution.<sup>145</sup> In a similar pamphlet put out five years ago and dealing with the Second Five Year Plan the question of agrarian reforms was side-stepped altogether.<sup>146</sup>

Despite the resolutions adopted at Nagpur, their implementation was vigorously opposed within the Congress itself. Prime Minister Nehru admitted this in his speech at the conference of leaders of Pradesh Congress Committees

<sup>143</sup> See: *Rural India*, Vol. XXII, No. 6 (1959), p. 1.

<sup>144</sup> *Hindustan Times*, 9 January 1961.

<sup>145</sup> *Draft Outline of the Third Five Year Plan: An Analysis* (New Delhi, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries, 1960), pp. 5-6.

<sup>146</sup> See: *Draft Note on the Second Five Year Plan* (New Delhi, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries, 1955).

in April 1960. He said: 'With respect to land reforms it had been found that there were many Congressmen who were reluctant to welcome fresh innovations such as the imposition of ceiling'.<sup>147</sup>

The decision to complete the enactment of legislation on ceiling before the end of 1959 was thwarted. In the resolution on the Third Five Year Plan adopted by the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee in Raipur in October 1960 it was pointed out: 'It is important to remember that the land reforms are the foundation for agricultural growth. The accepted programme for land reforms all over the country must, therefore, be completed without delay'.<sup>148</sup>

It was only in 1961, after a delay of almost two years, that the legislation was enacted in all States. However, the enemies of further land reforms, those within the ruling party among them, went on attacking the very principle of a ceiling. The former editor of the *AICC Economic Review*, Sunil Guha was perfectly right in stating: "The idea of a ceiling on existing holdings and future acquisitions is an accepted policy. But it still continues to be the centre of controversy".<sup>149</sup> Highly instructive in this respect is the article by Prof. Shyam Nandan Sinha in the *AICC Economic Review* in the latter half of 1961, when laws imposing upper limits on holdings had been enacted in practically all States.<sup>150</sup> How right Sunil Guha proved to be! Exactly a year later, the journal in which he had published his notes offered its columns for an attack against the very principle of a ceiling so pompously proclaimed at the Nagpur session of the National Congress.

Although the opponents did not succeed in baulking the adoption of ceiling legislation by the State legislatures they did manage to prolong the time limit fixed by the govern-

<sup>147</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, 1960, No. 2, 3 & 4, p. 223.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 1960, No. 9, 10 & 11, p. 432.

<sup>149</sup> Sunil Guha, 'Land Reforms: the Balance-Sheet', *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. XII, No. 7 (22 August 1960), p. 78.

<sup>150</sup> See: Prof. Shyam Nandan Sinha, 'Land Ceilings: Some Points of View', *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. XIII, No. 7 (22 August 1961).

ment and the Congress leadership for implementing it. The resolution passed by the Standing Committee of the National Development Council said: 'States which had not yet enacted legislation for ceilings should complete the legislative measures needed by the end of 1958-59',<sup>151</sup> but the Nagpur session of the Congress adopted a resolution calling for completing the enactment of legislation by the end of 1959. However, in the States of Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mysore and Madras at the beginning of 1961 the bills had not yet been finally approved by the legislative assemblies.<sup>152</sup>

It was a repetition of the story of enactment of zamindari abolition laws by the States. Dr P. C. Joshi of the Delhi School of Economics correctly stated in his review of agrarian reforms:

The wide latitude given to State governments (in defining a family holding, in determining the level of ceilings, in deciding whether ceilings should apply to individual or family holdings, and in fixing exemptions or methods of distribution of surplus lands) was bound to open the door for endless manipulations and manoeuvrings, pulls and pressures, in a manner that the very object of ceilings was likely to be put in jeopardy and even defeated.<sup>153</sup>

Dr Joshi was right, but let us see the disparity between the declared objects and the real objects.

As has been pointed out before, the ceiling on landholdings was put forward as one of the principal aims of agrarian policy only at the beginning of the Second Five Year Plan. In the First Five Year Plan only the general principle was laid out that 'there should be an upper limit to the amount of land that an individual may hold'.<sup>154</sup> The authors of that document did not set themselves the task

<sup>151</sup> ASI, Vol. XII, No. 7 (October 1957), p. 759.

<sup>152</sup> India, 1961: *A Reference Annual*, p. 267.

<sup>153</sup> P. C. Joshi, 'Land Reforms in India,' *Perspective: An Economic Review*, No. 3 (December 1961), pp. 34-35.

<sup>154</sup> *The First Five Year Plan*, p. 188.

of all-round examination of the possible results and ultimate ends of fixing an upper limit to private landholding. Moreover, they declared that 'if it were the sole object of policy to reduce the holdings of the larger owners with a view to providing for the landless or for increasing the farms of those who now have uneconomic fragments, the facts at present available suggest that these aims are not likely to be achieved in any substantial measure.'<sup>155</sup> Such a line of policy, naturally, did not favour the implementation of the ceiling principle, but, on the contrary, presupposed a very long delay in its realization.

*The Report of the Committee on Size of Holdings*, Panel on Land Reforms, set the following aims to be attained by fixing a ceiling on landholdings: (i) meeting the widespread desire to possess land; (ii) reducing glaring inequalities in ownership and use of land; (iii) reducing inequalities in agricultural incomes; and (iv) enlarging the sphere of self-employment.<sup>156</sup>

In the preceding section of the chapter we have tried to show that although zamindari abolition legislation has considerably reduced the sphere of semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry, it has not eliminated it fully and has left the land concentrated in the hands of a handful of big and middle landowners. The landlords remained the most influential and dominating section of rural society, and the position of the bulk of the peasantry remained virtually unchanged. That was due to the fact that in putting through this legislative measure the aim was to preserve the landlord class.

If the recommendations of the Panel on Land Reforms are assessed from this viewpoint it becomes obvious that while they contain certain progressive traits, they do not raise the fundamental questions of changing the condition of the different classes and how far the measures for fixing a ceiling on landholding will help to ease the condition of the actual tillers of the soil and thereby create the basis

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>156</sup> *Reports of the Committees of the Panel of Land Reforms*, p. 99.

for overcoming the backwardness of India's agrarian economy.

Neither were these questions touched upon in the Second Five Year Plan, even though full five pages are taken up with a detailed discussion of the different aspects of ceiling legislation.<sup>157</sup>

True, in the Third Five Year Plan it is distinctly declared that one of the principal aims of the agrarian policy, and particularly of the imposition of a ceiling on landholdings, 'is to eliminate all elements of exploitation and social injustice within the agrarian system.'<sup>158</sup> The authors of the document state that as a result of the implementation of the agrarian reforms 'the vast majority of cultivators in India would consist of peasant proprietors.'<sup>159</sup> After these solemn declarations we would have naturally expected to find in the following pages of the document that the imposition of a ceiling on holdings meant the abolition of landlordism and the exploitation of the actual cultivators based on it. However, we do not find this in the document. At the same time, in the *Review of the First Five Year Plan* (May 1957) it is properly underscored that 'it is clear that a far-reaching measure of land reform such as ceiling on holdings calls for considerable preparation, a clear view as to the agrarian structure and relations between different sections of the rural population which it is intended to bring into existence over the next few years.'<sup>160</sup>

Thus, in the declared policy of the government on the ceiling we do not find a clear picture of the future of the landlord class. But we can find it by examining the legislation enacted and its implementation in some of the States.

Unfortunately, the author had at his disposal only two full texts of bills on ceilings, those for Bihar and Madras, and he, therefore, had to make use of digests of the main

<sup>157</sup> See: *Second Five Year Plan*, pp. 193-98.

<sup>158</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 220.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>160</sup> *Review of the First Five Year Plan*, p. 326.

provisions of the laws of other States given in a number of official publications.<sup>161</sup>

It should be mentioned that they deal primarily with the imposition of a ceiling on existing holdings, which is connected with the question of redistribution of landed property. As to ceilings on future acquisitions, some States fixed them earlier in the tenancy and zamindari abolition laws. By the middle of 1958 such ceilings had been imposed by 10 States: Assam, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Pepsu, Kashmir, Saurashtra, Bombay, Madhya Bharat and Hyderabad.

The ceiling on future acquisitions in no way affects existing large holdings, and that is why in a good many of the States it was fixed relatively long time ago. According to data for the beginning of 1961 ceilings on future acquisitions were fixed as follows in the different States.<sup>162</sup>

Assam	30 acres
Manipur	25 acres
Tripura	25-75 acres
West Bengal	25 acres
Orissa	25-100 acres
Bihar*	30-90 acres
Uttar Pradesh	12.5 acres
Delhi	30 standard acres
Punjab	30 standard acres
Himachal Pradesh	30 acres in Chamba district and land assessed at Rs 125 in other areas
Jammu and Kashmir	22.75 acres
Rajasthan	30 standard acres
Gujarat*	14-132 acres
Maharashtra*	16-156 acres
Madhya Pradesh	28-84 acres

<sup>161</sup> The author made use of material which appeared in *Agricultural Situation in India* in recent years, in *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, and in *Third Five Year Plan*. He also made use of surveys conducted by some authors mentioned in the cited works of Dr P. C. Joshi, Shri N. Prasada Rao, and others.

<sup>162</sup> *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, pp. 266-67.

Mysore*	Land yielding net income of Rs 3,600
Andhra Pradesh	18-216 acres
Madras*	30-120 acres
Kerala	15-37.5 acres

\* On 1 January 1961, these were ceilings as in bills before the respective legislatures.

A comparison of ceilings on future acquisitions with the figures on distribution of the land in different States given in the preceding sections will show that in many cases the ceiling fixed is higher than the size of the average holdings of even the rich peasants. Thus, there remains every possibility for further concentration of the land in the hands of landlords and rich peasants through bankruptcy of small peasant landowners.

In fact, in many States transfers of land increased as a result of this in the 1950's with concentration of land gaining ground. In Andhra, for example, between 1953 and 1957 the number of proprietors of holdings of over 20 acres went up from 183,427 to 193,742, and the acreage they owned from 7,998,000 to 9,291,000.<sup>163</sup>

It should be mentioned, however, that ceiling on future acquisitions did not particularly hinder concentration of the land either. In Uttar Pradesh, for instance, the Zamin-dari Abolition Act fixed a ceiling of 30 acres on future acquisitions back in 1952; later it was reduced by an amendment to 12.5 acres. However, according to the data reported by the Revenue Department in 1960 the number of holders of more than 30 acres had gone up since 1952-53 from 22,234 to 29,102 and the land owned by them from 1,900,000 acres to 2,257,000.<sup>164</sup> It is also known that on buying additional land the increase in the total area of the holding above the ceiling is concealed by fictitiously divid-

<sup>163</sup> See: N. Prasada Rao, 'Recent Developments in Agriculture in Andhra Region,' *New Age*, Vol. IX, No. 10 (October 1960), p. 42.

<sup>164</sup> Quoted from the article by P. K. Tandon, 'Changes in land-ownership Pattern in UP,' *New Age*, Vol. X, No. 1 (January 1961), p. 43.

ing it up among relatives, and so on. Moreover, during his visits to villages in India, in particular in West Bengal and Bihar, the author came across cases of rich peasants in possession of plots of land for many years, sometimes more than 10 years, which, they said, they had received for use from persons to whom they had once lent money. These transactions are not recorded, and by means of such *de facto* land transfers it is not particularly difficult to bypass the law on ceilings.

The class nature of the legislation covering ceilings on landholdings becomes even more patent if we analyze the figures on the size of ceiling fixed in the different States.

The laws enacted by the State legislatures presuppose a ceiling on existing holdings that would preserve the small and middle landholders and rich peasants. With more than 60 per cent of landholdings in India under five acres, the ceilings fixed by the principal States are as follows:<sup>105</sup>

Andhra Pradesh	27-312 acres
Assam	50 acres
Bihar	24-72 acres
Gujarat	14-132 acres
Jammu and Kashmir	22.75 acres
Kerala	15-37.5 acres
Madhya Pradesh	28.84 acres
Madras	30-120 acres
Maharashtra	18-126 acres
Mysore	27-216 acres
Orissa	25-100 acres
Punjab	60 acres
Rajasthan	30 standard acres
Uttar Pradesh	40-120 acres
West Bengal	25 acres

Besides, in many States families consisting of more than five persons are permitted to keep additional land. In those cases the total ceiling is double in Bihar, Madras, Maharashtra, Mysore, Orissa, Rajasthan, Delhi and Manipur, roughly 67 per cent higher in Kerala, 90 per cent higher in Madhya Pradesh, and 140 per cent higher in Tripura;

<sup>105</sup> Third Five Year Plan, pp. 236-38.

and in Andhra Pradesh there is no upper limit at all in such a case, since that State allows from 6 to 72 acres for every 'extra' member of the family, depending on the quality of the land. In the latter State landlords may keep up to 90 acres of grazing land. Only in the States of Assam, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, the Punjab, West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh there is no allowance for the size of the family. As in these States holdings exceeding the fixed ceiling are comparatively rare, there was simply no need to include in the laws provisions concerning the size of the family.

The various demographic surveys conducted in recent years, and in particular the 8th Round of the National Sample Survey revealed that the average family of a big landowner consisted of more than five persons. The size of households, according to the data for India as a whole for 1953-54, was as follows: in the 25-30 acre grade 7.17 persons; in the 30-50 acre grade 7.32; and in the 50 acres and over group 8.13. The average for all grades being 5.01, and for the under-one-acre grade 4.48.<sup>166</sup> Under these conditions, landlords did not have to resort to special devices to keep practically all of their holding.

Can we seriously speak of redistribution of the land and its transfer to the tillers of the soil if landlords having large families (and they really have a good many relations who can be included in Hindu joint families) are permitted, in Orissa, legally to keep up to 100 acres, in Delhi up to 120, in Uttar Pradesh up to 132, in Bihar up to 144, in Madhya Pradesh up to 159, in Madras up to 240, in Maharashtra up to 252, and in Mysore up to 432 acres?

Thus, the legislation itself presupposes preservation of not only small landlord holdings, but in the case of some areas (such as the delta districts of Andhra Pradesh) fairly large holdings. Worthy of note in this respect are the substantial differences in the ceilings in different States, which cannot be explained merely by the soil and climate,

<sup>166</sup> National Sample Survey, No. 36, p. 44.

since no uniform upper limits by far have been fixed for private holdings on the soils of the dry areas in Deccan or the irrigated alluvial soils in the different States. As we have already stated, the variations in ceilings are to be explained primarily by the average size of a large holding in a particular State. In addition, another factor obviously is the influence exerted in the legislatures by different political forces, which is especially to be observed in the State of Andhra Pradesh, where the landlords who own large farms have succeeded in putting through a ceiling law which has made redistribution of the land a sheer farce.

As far back as 1956, the Planning Commission recommended fixing the ceiling at three times the size of family holdings, and family holding was defined as a plot of land yielding a net income of Rs 1,200 a year. We do not have to argue that the area taken as the basis is not very small, since the mass of the peasantry's income from their plots is considerably less than Rs 1,200. But we must draw attention to the fact that this line has made possible the most liberal construction of what the actual size of family holding ought to be in the different States. The landlord elements have made full use of this.

If the real motives were identical with those proclaimed, the ceiling would be considerably lower and it would be more uniform for the different States.

What then were the real aims in drawing up and enacting ceiling legislation? For even after the legislation has been fully implemented, a good part, if not the bulk, of landlord holdings will be retained by them. The answer to the question will be found through further study of the legislation itself and its actual implementation in several States.

Of course, with so high a ceiling the surplus land is bound to be very limited. Suffice it to cite the Punjab as an example. Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, the Punjab Chief Minister, wrote in 1960 that enforcement of the ceiling of 30 standard acres would make it possible to get some 450,000

acres.<sup>167</sup> According to the data compiled by the 8th Round of the National Sample Survey (1953-54), in the former Punjab and former Pepsu States holders of 25 acres or more made up in the former 4.23 per cent of the total owners and held 37.99 per cent of the total land, and in the latter, 5.69 and 35.46 per cent respectively, and together they held more than 5,500,000 acres. Thus, the ceiling fixed affects no more than about eight per cent of the total area of the holdings of the big proprietors.

We have no data at our disposal concerning the total area expected to be obtained for redistribution following the imposition of ceiling in all of India's States. The incomplete data for the States of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, and the data on the Punjab given above, only show that even the surplus land left will not be enough materially to satisfy the peasant's land hunger.

Those opposed to limiting large holdings usually cite this fact as a basic argument against ceiling; the bulk of the landless and land-poor peasants, they say, will get no land anyway. But in this argument the very premise is wrong—the advocates of the landlord class base their arguments on the high ceilings fixed by the States' legislatures. It would be a different story if the maximum size of holdings fixed were not so high. This was convincingly shown as far back as 1956 by N. Prasada Rao, the then General Secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha in his *Minute of Dissent to the Report of the Committee on Size of Holdings by the Panel on Land Reforms*.<sup>168</sup> Even if a ceiling of 20 acres, a fairly high one, were fixed, families of agricultural labourers and land-hungry peasants could, according to his estimate, have received 4.25 standard acres each in Pepsu and 9.7 in Saurashtra.

However, the ceilings fixed by the States being what they are, Dr R. Lal correctly stated in the *AICC Economic Review*, that 'the surplus released would not even scratch

<sup>167</sup> Pratap Singh Kairon, 'Punjab Forges Ahead,' *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. XI, 16-18 (16 January 1960), p. 150.

<sup>168</sup> See: *Report of the Committees of the Panel on Land Reforms*, pp. 147-48.

the surface'.<sup>169</sup> We cannot but concur with his conclusion that 'already there is growing a general consensus of feeling among the masses that ceilings are not going to affect the landownership beyond a negligible margin'.<sup>170</sup>

And so, even if we are to assume that the legislation passed will be fully implemented and all abuses by landlords stopped in time, even then concentration of the land will continue, though not so flagrantly, and the bulk of the landless and land-poor villagers will not get land. In such a case the question naturally arises as to what was the real purpose of ceiling legislation.

Highly significant in this respect is the statement by Arun Chandra Guha, prominent Congress Member of Parliament, published in the official organ of Congress in 1959, in which he underscored that further land reforms must be carried out to keep the peasantry under the influence of Congress.<sup>171</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru had said in one of his speeches at the Nagpur session of Congress that 'though the imposition of ceilings would affect only an infinitesimal minority of landlords, and though its actual, practical gains would not be much, the sentimental gains would be tremendous'.<sup>172</sup>

Thus, the main reason for putting through ceiling laws was a desire to prevent further development of the class struggle in the Indian countryside.

However, the imposition of ceilings had a certain economic aspect, too. What it amounted to was that the drawing up and enactment of ceiling legislation became, as it were, a means of extra-economic pressure on the landlord class, who thereby were forced to step up the process of the shift to capitalist farming. In brief, the position is that the laws enacted provide for preservation of the large

<sup>169</sup> Dr R. Lal, 'A Case for Lowering the Ceilings,' *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. XI, No. 21 (1 March 1960), p. 40.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> See: Shri Arun Chandra Guha, M.P., 'A Small News Item with a Big Import,' *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. X, No. 22 (15 March 1959), p. 19.

<sup>172</sup> See: *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. X, No. 19 (1 February 1959), p. 23.

capitalist-type farms. This aspect of the ceiling question was elaborated by a committee specially appointed for the purpose, which recommended that the laws on ceilings should not be extended to the following types of farms: plantations, sugarcane farms owned by sugar factories; orchards; cattle-breeding and dairy farms; 'farms in a compact block,' 'efficient farms,' 'mechanised farms and farms with heavy investments.'<sup>173</sup> These recommendations were accepted by the government and were incorporated in the Second Five Year Plan in a slightly modified form.<sup>174</sup> Landlords were afforded the opportunity of partly avoiding alienation of their lands by switching over to capitalist farming. In some States (the Punjab and Mysore) the recommendations in the ceiling laws have been, in the opinion of N. Prasada Rao, defined so vaguely that practically all landlords' farms can be included in the category of 'efficient farms'.<sup>175</sup> In Assam, mechanized farms of up to 166 2/3 acres have been exempted from the operation of the law.<sup>176</sup> Preserved, too, in Andhra Pradesh are large capitalist-type farms which fall in the category of 'efficiently managed farms'.<sup>177</sup>

Moreover, there is no uniformity in the legislation of the different States. For example, while in the ceiling laws passed by the Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Madras legislatures exemption is provided for lands under sugarcane belonging to sugar factories, in Maharashtra the ceiling has been extended to cover sugarcane plantations in spite of the stubborn resistance of the owners of the sugar factories and the powerful support they received inside and outside the legislative assembly in Bombay.

Sometimes 'exemptions' are so formulated in the laws that they lend themselves to the broadest interpretation. In the Madras bill, Article 69 (III) provides for exemption

<sup>173</sup> *Reports of the Committee of the Panel on Land Reforms*, p.

105.

<sup>174</sup> *Second Five Year Plan*, pp. 196-197.

<sup>175</sup> N. Prasada Rao, *Congress Agrarian Reforms*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>176</sup> India, 1958: *A Reference Annual*, p. 282.

<sup>177</sup> ASI, Vol. XV, No. 12 (March 1961), p. 1397.

form the operation of the law '*any land held by any co-operative society*'. (*italics added*)<sup>178</sup> Of course, landlords will not hesitate to avail themselves of the article to set up all kinds of pseudo-cooperatives, about which quite a lot of information can be found in reports of agro-economic surveys as well as in the press. The same bill permits the landlords, in addition to the maximum fixed, to keep up to 50 acres of grazing land. And, moreover, the following explanation is given: 'Any land exclusively used for grazing shall not cease to be grazing land merely by reason of the ploughing or preparing the soil for the sowing of fodder seeds or of the raising or harvesting of fodder crops.'<sup>179</sup> But who will guarantee that with ploughing of grazing land formally permitted, some time after ceiling legislation has been implemented in the particular locality, and 'surplus land' has been determined, acquired and distributed, this 'grazing' land would not be used to grow other crops? Where is the guarantee, if the corrupt patwari, our old acquaintance, is to be charged with the duty preventing the violation of this law?

Besides, in addition to the exemptions envisaged in the recommendations of the Planning Commission, clauses providing for the preservation of large holdings of religious and charitable institutions which exceed the ceiling are included in the acts passed in many States (as, for instance, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Assam). In some parts of the country, in particular in the South, these are large holdings. And as we know, landholding by temples is really semi-feudal in character.

The whole system of putting through land reforms in India shows that under present conditions it is hard to expect a radical redistribution of the land in favour of the mass of landless and land-poor peasantry.

At the same time, the content of the ceiling laws enacted

<sup>178</sup> Government of Madras (*LA Bill No. 8 of 1960*); *A Bill to Provide for the Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings and for Certain Other Matters Connected Therewith in the State of Madras*, p. 47.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

as well as the manner of their enforcement shows that the chief aim of this measure, which formally was designed to limit landlord holdings, is to hasten the process of turning rent-collecting landlords into capitalist entrepreneurs. That is exactly why the centre of gravity was shifted to the period in which the general principles were worked out and ceiling legislation drafted, when during a long period (more than 10 years) the semi-feudal landlords, under the threat of possible alienation of part of their land, were virtually forced to shift to capitalist farming.

Mass eviction of peasants served as an instrument for orienting landlords towards capitalist farming. We shall deal with this problem in detail in the next chapter. All that needs to be done here is to underscore that the preparation for imposing a ceiling on landholding has served as a direct cause of the intensification of this process. Very interesting in this connection is a report from Rajasthan which appeared in the weekly magazine *Link* which states that jagirdars and biswedars had decided at a secret meeting to take 'effective' actions. And this was the result: 'In the Jalore-Sirohi area, in a frenzied drive for ejectment, some of the jagirdars made use of firearms. Three tenants were murdered when they resisted forced eviction'.<sup>180</sup>

Some of the laws on ceiling contain provisions which in effect invite landowners to evict tenants from the land. Bihar can serve as a typical illustration: the ceiling bill in that State gave the landholders (ryots) the right to resume lands from tenants (under-ryots), provided the tenant is left up to five acres and the resumable area does not exceed the fixed ceiling.<sup>181</sup>

The working out of the ceiling principle, which took nearly 10 years, not only, and apparently not so much, enabled the big landholders to turn to capitalist farming by leasing out less land, as permitted them in various ways to conceal a considerable part of 'surplus land'. And these

<sup>180</sup> *Link*, Vol. I, No. 22 (11 January 1959), p. 16.

<sup>181</sup> Government of Bihar, Law Department: *The Bihar Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land) Bill, 1959* (Patna, 1959), p. 7.

actions of the landlords were virtually legalised by appropriate provisions in the land ceiling bills.

Firstly, in most of the bills and acts the ceiling has been imposed on individual and not family holdings, which gave landowners the opportunity of fictitiously dividing up their property among relatives. Similar opportunities are afforded also by the clauses in bills which provide for dividing the land among different branches of the Hindu joint family, in the process of which, in some States, as for instance in Uttar Pradesh, individuals belonging to different generations of the same family could be set up as units for imposition of ceiling.

Secondly, in some States (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and Mysore, for instance) the laws do not prohibit alienation and transfer of land before the laws come into force. In the Orissa bill the scale of land above the fixed ceiling by big landholders is specifically envisaged. And while in most States restrictions on this score have been put through, in some (Maharashtra, Manipur and Uttar Pradesh) too remote a date was set for the restriction to go into effect (1959), and in the others it has to be established in each particular case whether the transfer of land is against the provisions and objects of the act. However, we know how local administrative authorities can establish this!

Since 1953 leading bodies of the Congress have repeatedly passed resolutions reaffirming the decision to enforce the ceiling on holdings, and the same line of policy has been set out in a number of government documents. The utterances of prominent political and government officials, the discussion of the problem in the press and within the National Congress, and, lastly, the drawing up of the first bills in some of the States—all this has been ever since the middle-fifties, even before the adoption of the Nagpur resolution, a serious forewarning to the big landholders. And they knew what they had to do; while the battle of words was going on around the problem of ceiling they carried out all sorts of benami transfers.

Already in 1956 the first Panel on Land Reforms noted with alarm:

It has been brought to our notice that anticipating imposition of ceilings, substantial owners are making benami transactions in favour of near relations and friends to bring their holdings within assumed limits. If such transfers are allowed, they will defeat the very object of imposition of ceilings. We would, therefore, recommend that any transfer or lease made after a given date, should be disregarded in determining the surplus area.<sup>182</sup>

As we can see, however, the recommendations of the Panel were not taken into consideration in drawing up ceiling bills, and *mala fide* transfers of land after the adoption of the Nagpur resolution became an even more frequent occurrence. During the Chandigarh session of the AICC in the autumn of 1956 some of the speakers called attention to the fact that this sort of 'transfer of land' is taking place on a wide scale.<sup>183</sup> However, no decisions were taken on this question. Moreover, in many places the local authorities connived at these machinations by the landlords. Highly indicative in this connection is a report from Madras State which appeared in one of the issue of the *AICC Economic Review*.<sup>184</sup> In hearing a case involving the sale of 55 acres of land 'the Madras High Court held that there was nothing illegal or opposed to public policy in the sale of surplus land by landlords in anticipation of a ceiling and that the sale of surplus land by landowners was in itself an effective instrumentation of the impending land reforms.' Justice Ananthanarayanan added: 'Had it been otherwise, the State would have declared a prohibition similar to the moratorium on the sale of land.'<sup>185</sup> It should be noted that Justice Ananthanarayanan was indeed right in his own way: the Madras Ceiling Bill prohibits the transfer of land

<sup>182</sup> Reports of the Committee of the Panel on Land Reforms, p. 103.

<sup>183</sup> See: *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. XI, No. 13 (1 November 1959).

<sup>184</sup> *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. XI, No. 23 (1 April 1960).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

in excess of the ceiling area only 'after the date of the publication of this Act.'<sup>186</sup>

At the same time, from the judgement of the Madras High Court one can guess the real, and not the proclaimed, purposes of the ceiling legislation, namely, not to abolish but to *preserve* landlord ownership of the land and the landlords themselves as a class of Indian society. Indeed, what does the transfer and sale of part of the land of the big landowners lead to? It leads to the land passing into the hands of those possessing money capital, in other words, to representatives of the same landlord class and the same rich peasantry. A direct result of ceiling legislation has, therefore, been a redistribution of landed property within the landlord class with a reduction in the upper limit of large holdings, and, evidently, also a certain increase in the holdings of the peasant upper crust.

To find the answer to the question posed by Dr A. M. Khusro in his excellent article on the need for structural changes in India's agriculture, we have to look to the real direction in which agrarian policy is being pursued in the States. In this article after suggesting certain measures against bogus land transfers, he stated that 'it is difficult to know why this has not been done'<sup>187</sup>

That the situation has not changed to this day is attested to by the Third Five Year Plan, in which it is dolefully recorded that 'it would be correct to say that, in recent years, transfers of land have tended to defeat the aims of the legislation for ceilings and to reduce its impact on the rural economy'.<sup>188</sup>

The authors of this document are unquestionably right. Take the following three items, all of them dated 1961, from three different States. 'There has been a marked tendency all over the State to reduce individual holdings by sale', reported the *Hindustan Times* correspondent from

<sup>186</sup> Government of Madras (*LA Bill No. 8 of 1960*), pp. 29, 67.

<sup>187</sup> Dr A. M. Khusro, 'Agriculture and Structural Change,' *AICC Economic Review*, Vol. XI, No. 16-18 (16 January 1960), p. 117.

<sup>188</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 228.

Maharashtra at the time when the Land Ceiling Bill was debated in the State's Legislative Assembly.<sup>189</sup> In his article on agrarian reforms in Gujarat in *Janata*, Ishverlal Desai reported that he knew a landowner possessing 1,400 acres who managed to divide up his land into 30 parcels of up to 50 acres apiece (the ceiling is 96 acres) and transfer them to members of his family and other relations.<sup>190</sup> And the third report, which appeared in the *Socialist Congressman*, reported Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh C. B. Gupta as having admitted at a public meeting in Almora district that since the big landowners had already managed to divide their land among acquaintances and relatives 'very little land was now available for distribution among the landless'.<sup>191</sup>

That being so, the question will arise in the mind of any objective observer whether the legislative, judicial and executive authorities are really so weak that they are unable to prevent *mala fide* transactions in land, or their *bona fide* words are at variance with their *mala fide* deeds. H. D. Malaviya, editor of *Socialist Congressman*, was obviously right when he wrote:

However it be, the fact is that ninety per cent of the possible usefulness of a programme of ceiling upon landholdings has been lost, and land redistribution has been, by and large, a failure in our country....The failure is to be attributed to the fact that there have been people in charge of implementation of policies which they never accepted.<sup>192</sup>

In the section on zamindari abolition we have already pointed out that the effectiveness of the agrarian legislation passed is largely determined by the methods used to implement it. Unfortunately, the peasantry has not been enlisted to help carry out the reform; its enforcement is entirely entrusted to the administrative and revenue auth-

<sup>189</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, 7 January 1961.

<sup>190</sup> Ishverlal Desai, 'Gujarat Land Ceiling Bill,' *Janata*, Vol. XV, No. 51 (1 January 1961), p. 7.

<sup>191</sup> *Socialist Congressman*, Vol. I, No. 6 (1 July 1961), p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

rities. At the same time, as has been justly stated in the Third Five Year Plan, 'frequently at the lower levels of administration, collusion and evasion have gone unchecked, and there has been failure also to enlist the support and sanction of the village community in favour of effective enforcement of legal provisions.'<sup>193</sup>

In contrast to other States, Article 15 of the Agrarian Relations Bill passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly on 10 June 1959, provided for setting up special Land Tribunals to be made up of three persons, two of whom to be elected representatives of the local authorities.<sup>194</sup> However, after the dissolution of the State's Legislative Assembly (by the President) and the dismissal of Kerala's communist-led government, anti-democratic amendments were put through, and, in particular, the provision concerning election of members to the Land Tribunal was repealed.<sup>195</sup> Today, the procedure for implementing agrarian legislation in Kerala does not differ from that in other States, where full responsibility is vested in the revenue officials.

Determining the conditions under which the agrarian legislation, including the ceiling laws, are enforced is not only the omnipotence of the bureaucracy, but also the ignorance of the illiterate peasants about the laws. Interesting in this respect are the results of a poll taken in the autumn of 1956 in Sahajapur village (West Bengal), where it was found that only nine per cent of the peasants polled were aware of the proposed imposition of a ceiling on holdings in conformity with the law passed in 1955.<sup>196</sup> At the same time the big landowners in the village, three owners of over 25 acres each, had already managed to 'prepare' for the enforcement of the ceiling law, as investigators found that they had concealed more than 30 per cent of the total land under cultivation in the village.<sup>197</sup> Dr Y. P. Bhattacharjee

<sup>193</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 221.

<sup>194</sup> *Agrarian Relations Bill* (as Passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly) (Ernakulam, 1959), pp. 21-22.

<sup>195</sup> See: A. K. Gopalan, 'The Amended Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill.' *New Age*, Vol. IX, No. 12 (December 1960), p. 12.

<sup>196</sup> *Sahajapur*. p. 123.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

came to the conclusion that 'obviously there must have been benami and other transfers to evade the law. The position is indeed very disquieting and has serious implications for the future of land reforms in the country. For, there is every reason to believe that what has happened in Sahajapur has taken place in most of the villages.'<sup>198</sup> We cannot but agree with Dr J. P. Bhattacharjee.

In the light of these facts we doubt the effectiveness of measures such as the Andhra Pradesh Agricultural Holdings (Census) Ordinance of 1957, which enjoins owners of more than 25 acres to report to the tahsildar, on the threat of a fine, the area of their holdings.<sup>199</sup> We should assume that the tahsildars in Andhra Pradesh as everywhere else would act against the interests of the landlords to protect the poor peasants. But, alas, none who have investigated the situation in the villages in South India will affirm this.

One can hardly doubt the objectivity and sincerity of A. K. Das of Assam, who, speaking at a conference of leaders of Pradesh Congress Committees, called attention to the fact that in his State corruption in the Police Department and Land Records Department 'would hamper the work of land reforms'.<sup>200</sup> In the light of all that has been said it becomes clear why from the very outset of enforcement of ceiling legislation the surplus land actually released proved much less than had been expected.

Ceiling legislation in Khammam district, Mulug taluk of Warangal district, Aurangabad district and part of Yadgir district (Hyderabad) was implemented as far back as 1955-56, and it was the conclusion of Gulzari Lal Nanda, the Union Minister for Planning and Labour, that 'the surplus land now being found is much less than earlier estimates'.<sup>201</sup> In fact, in the first two areas mentioned above, as against an expected surplus land of 122,209 acres only 4,000 acres

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53-54.

<sup>199</sup> ASI, Vol. XII, No. 7 (October 1957), p. 756.

<sup>200</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, 1958, No. 4, p. 205.

<sup>201</sup> Gulzari Lal Nanda, *Progress of Land Reforms in India* (New Delhi, 1957), p. 13.

were found.<sup>202</sup> And even the 4,000 acres were not turned over to peasants. Enforcement of the ceiling legislation began approximately in the same years in West Bengal. At first it was estimated that 600,000 acres would be released, then 400,000, and by 1961 the actual area acquired by the State was 268,000 acres.<sup>203</sup>

Thus, implementation of ceiling legislation is proceeding at no faster pace than the legislation abolishing the zamindari system. This is corroborated by the situation in some of the other States. In the Punjab, the imposition of a ceiling on holdings was begun back in 1956-57, but by the beginning of 1961 not a single acre had been redistributed. And although more than five years had passed since similar legislation was enacted in Assam, the second Panel on Land Reforms stated in 1961 that 'in Assam and the Punjab, rules have been framed and declarations of surplus land have been obtained which are now under scrutiny.'<sup>204</sup>

In their attempts to slow down enforcement of the ceiling laws the big landowners have resorted to the same devices the zamindars did. In Himachal Pradesh, for example, imposition of ceilings was held up due to writ petitions in the courts.

Fifteen years have passed since India won independence, thirteen years since the publication of the Kumarappa Committee's Report, and nine years since the All-India Congress Committee in 1953 attached primary importance to the imposition of ceiling. However, the ceiling law was fully carried out only in Kashmir State. As is generally known, the settlement of the agrarian question in Kashmir proceeded more democratically than in the rest of the country.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>202</sup> N. Prasada Rao, *Progress of Land Reforms*, p. 53.

<sup>203</sup> See: N. Prasada Rao, *Land Reforms under Congress Raj* (Communist Party Publication), p. 17.

<sup>204</sup> Quoted from *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> P. N. Kaul, 'Land Reforms in the Jammu and Kashmir State,' *Indian Journal of Economics*, Vol. XXXVII, Pt. 4, No. 147 (April 1957), pp. 383-84.

Implementation of the first stage of agrarian reform in that State began in April 1948 with promulgation by the government of the abolition of the rights of jagirdars, muafidars and mukkarardars—different groups of zamin-dari-type feudal landlords. Former tenants started to pay rent at lower rates direct to the government. Payments in kind, which were especially hard on the peasants, were abolished. Total reduction in rents in the former estates of jagirdars and the others is estimated at Rs 325,000, and Kashmir peasants obtained real relief through the enactment of the agrarian laws. The next stage began in 1950 with the passage of a law abolishing large landed estates. Under this law no one could own more than 20 acres. At first it was intended to pay the owners a moderate compensation for the alienated surplus land, but on 26 March 1952 the Constituent Assembly of Kashmir adopted a decision to take over the surplus land without compensation. Coming under the operation of the law were some 9,000 of the larger landowners, whose total holdings amounted to 662,500 acres, of which 562,500 were to be taken away as surplus land. By the middle of 1955 400,000 acres had actually been alienated, of which 200,000 were turned over to tenants and 200,000 to the government. Of the latter, 30,000 acres were distributed among landless farm labourers. By 1961, the land in excess of ceiling taken over amounted to some 450,000 acres.

It should be pointed out that even this land reform, which is more progressive than in the rest of India, did not completely abolish landlord ownership in Kashmir. Before the reform there were 150,000 landholders in the State who were leasing out land, and most of them have not been affected by the reform. Besides, the maximum size of a plot a peasant family can cultivate with existing implements is from 8 to 10 acres. The ceiling therefore, presupposes preservation of landowners who exploit hired labourers, even though they have but small holdings. Interesting in this connection is the indication in the Report of the Inquiry Committee appointed to examine the work of Land Reforms in Kashmir that tenants' plots of land average from

2.25 to 1.87 acres in size.<sup>206</sup> In Kashmir too, therefore, the reform has left a stratum of exploiters in the countryside and the possibility of continued semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry.

As has been pointed out above, Kashmir differs from the rest of the States not only in that the ceiling imposed there has already been enforced, but also in that the big land-owners received no compensation whatever.

The amount of compensation specified in ceiling legislation is not the same in the different States, nor is the principle underlying it the same. In some States compensation is based on the multiple-of-land-revenue principle, in others on the multiple of 'fair rent', and in still others on a multiple of 'net income.' But in spite of these differences they have one thing in common: everywhere the compensation is higher than what was paid to zamindars, coming close to the market price of land. And in Orissa the bill actually provides that 'surplus land' is to be sold by the owners at market prices. Thus, the recommendation of the first Panel on Land Reforms that 'the amount of compensation should in no case be more than 25 per cent of the market value'<sup>207</sup> had not been carried out.

Inasmuch as the provision covering compensation envisages payments in instalment up to 20 years, the big landlords have, like the ex-zamindars, been afforded the opportunity of exploiting the peasants for a very long time, with the help of the administrative machinery.

The fact is that allottees of surplus land also have to pay to the exchequer very high compensation, which in some States are only slightly less than the compensation paid to the landowners. Only West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir provided that the distribution of the acquired land should be free of charge.

According to 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' of the ceiling acts, the surplus land should be allotted to landless

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 387.

<sup>207</sup> *Reports of the Committee of the Panel on Land Reforms*, p. 104.

and land-poor peasants, namely, tenants, farm labourers and small owners. In some States the law specifies the exact procedure for distribution of the acquired land, but in others (Madras, for instance) the bill stipulates that the procedure is to be fixed by the administration, which is to issue special regulations for the purpose.

Moreover, some laws contain also provisions that essentially are loopholes which landlords could take advantage of to obtain the use of part of the land alienated from them.

Firstly, in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar there are provisions for the vesting of surplus land in village panchayats. As is well known, however, it is precisely in those States that large landowners, ex-zamindars among them, exercise fairly substantial, and sometimes decisive, influence in the village self-government bodies. The author has himself met such mukhyas of panchayats during his visit to Bihar. It is no accident, therefore, that during the debate on the agrarian resolution at the Nagpur session of the National Congress some of the speakers objected on these grounds to the recommendation that the land taken over after the imposition of the ceiling should be placed at the disposal of the panchayats.<sup>208</sup>

Secondly, in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Himachal Pradesh cooperatives have priority in getting surplus land. At the same time, as Ram Dayal Singh, a delegate to the Nagpur Congress session from the Punjab, rightly stated, and which was confirmed by surveys conducted in the past five years, 'the cooperatives would be dominated by the landowners and there would be no one to look after the interests of the landless'.<sup>209</sup>

Lastly, some States (Uttar Pradesh, for instance) provide for keeping surplus land of mechanized farms as state farms, and, moreover, in the appointment of managers preference is to be given to the existing holders. The legislators certainly took good care to leave the back-door wide open for the big landowners !

<sup>208</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, Nos. 1 & 2, 1959, pp. 52, 54 and ff.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

An opportunity to evade the ceiling legislation in the course of distribution of surplus land has been afforded to landlords not only by provisions of some of the Acts themselves, but, as can be seen from West Bengal's experience, also by the very procedure established for distribution of the land.

The debarring of the toiling peasantry from supervising the implementation of the legislation has enabled the landlords, with the support of the local police authorities, to openly sabotage the reform by employing mass terror against allottees of surplus land. Already back in 1957-58, the Government of West Bengal distributed part of the surplus land among the cropsharers and made an arrangement with them on an year-to-year basis. The bargadars were to pay into the exchequer a licence fee of Rs 10 per acre, but the jotedars—the former owners of the land—virtually ignored the new settlement. With the aid of goondas the landlords illegally seized part of the crop, and in some cases the whole of the crop, from the bargadars' fields. But the significant fact was the support given to these illegal acts by the local police and judicial authorities. Reports of clashes between the bargadars and jotedars for the crop on the lands that formally had passed to the control of the government appeared in the press, in particular, in the weekly *New Age*<sup>210</sup>.

Moreover the distribution of the surplus land acquired was not accompanied by the vesting of cropsharers with the same full occupancy rights as were enjoyed by the jotedars and ryots. Unfortunately, this policy continues to this day: according to press reports, from the beginning of 1961, land redistribution was to proceed under an arrangement with cropsharers on a three-year basis.<sup>211</sup> Thus, once again allottees of surplus lands in West Bengal are not getting proprietary rights to their plots. This situation will undoubtedly encourage landlords to continue their attempts

<sup>210</sup> See also: Bhowani Sen's article 'Struggle for Ceiling in West Bengal,' in *New Age*, Vol. VIII, No. 7 (July 1959).

<sup>211</sup> *The Hindustan Standard*, 25 January 1961.

to sabotage ceiling legislation and a further sharpening of the class struggle in the Bengal countryside.

A study of the legislation for a ceiling and the materials dealing with the initial experience in implementing it leads to the conclusion that this measure of agrarian policy will not solve the main problem, which is to do away with the concentration of the land in the hands of the landlord class and to transfer the land to the tillers of the soil.

Of course, the bigger holdings of landlords will be broken up and an insignificant percentage of tenants and labourers will get small plots of land. But all this will not change the basis of the social structure of the Indian village of today.

And this is not surprising, since the real purpose of the agrarian policy pursued in India is, as we have tried to show in analysing the zamindari abolition legislation and the imposition of a ceiling on landholdings, gradually to convert the landlords and rich peasants into middle and small landowning farmers of the capitalist type. And this objective has nothing in common with the proclaimed slogans of turning the land over to the tillers of the soil.

A no less important aspect of ceiling legislation is to draw away the mass of the peasantry from revolutionary struggle for land.

### *The Bhoojan and Gramdan Movement*

The purpose of the Bhoojan movement, too, objectively, is to serve as a brake on the revolutionary struggle of the peasants. This movement consists in the donation of land which later is to be distributed among landless and land-poor peasants; it was sponsored by the prominent follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

He launched the movement as an antidote to the forcible seizure and redistribution of landlords' land by rebellious peasants in Telengana. Vinoba Bhave himself has repeatedly indicated this in his utterances. Suresh Rambhai, a prominent Bhoojan worker, in a study dealing with Bhave

and his activity, quotes him as saying:

The rich people are responsible for the creation of the Communists. The rich in fact are the fathers of the Communists.... In the summer you will not find grass, but as soon as the rainy season starts, grass begins to grow as there are seeds of grass in the earth. So also police can curb the communist menace for a while, but it cannot root it out permanently.... The police will not be very helpful in fighting the communist menace. The only way to root it out is to remove the inadequate distribution of land in a peaceful way.<sup>212</sup>

We can cite another and even more definite statement made by him at the close of 1951 on the aims and purposes of the movement. He said:

If landowning people do not part with land and a proper atmosphere for land reform legislation is not created, the third alternative would be a bloody revolution. My attempt is to prevent such a violent development, and after my experience in Telengana and in Uttar Pradesh, I am convinced that peaceful methods can succeed.<sup>213</sup>

Vinobaji received the first donation of land on 18 April 1951 in the village of Pochampalli. Between April and June of that year he visited more than 200 villages in Telengana getting land donations totalling 12,200 acres.<sup>214</sup> Later he carried on his activity chiefly in North India, in the States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and in the latter State between 14 September 1952 and 31 December 1954 he received in donations 2,200,000 acres from 286,420 donors.<sup>215</sup>

During its early years, the movement achieved comparative success, particularly in some regions. It elicited a great deal of interest among the public in India as well

<sup>212</sup> Suresh Rambhai, *Vinoba and His Mission* (Kashi, Akhil Bharat Sarva Seva Sangh, March 1958), p. 45.

<sup>213</sup> Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Yajna* (Land-gifts Mission) (Ahmedabad, June 1954), p. 21.

<sup>214</sup> B. R. Misra, *V for Vinoba: The Economics of the Bhoodan Movement* (Calcutta, 1956), p. 22.

<sup>215</sup> Suresh Rambhai, *Progress of a Pilgrimage* (Banaras, March 1956), p. 283.

as in other countries. Testifying to this, among other things, is the fairly extensive literature dealing with the movement and Vinoba Bhave's activity and the periodicals propagating the ideas of Bhoodan published in various languages of India.<sup>216</sup> The movement was favourably received in the West because it was regarded as a successful way of combating communist ideology in India.<sup>217</sup>

However, in the course of time it was found that the movement failed to justify the hopes placed on it with respect to the class struggle of the peasantry. And, besides, the flow of land donations began to peter out, as landlords had resigned themselves to these 'sacrifices' only during the mass peasant movement on the eve of the zamindari abolition legislation and the first years of its implementation. The land donation curve took a deep plunge, as can be seen from the following figures:<sup>218</sup>

#### Total Land Donations Received

Between 18 April 1951

and 25 March 1954	2,763,465 acres
by 25 March 1955	3,771,479 "
by .. March 1956	4,307,491 "
by 30 November 1958	4,409,636 "
by 1 January 1961	4,411,191 "

Thus, while during the first five years donations of land received averaged roughly 1,000,000 acres a year, during the next five years they averaged only 20,000 acres a year. It is thus perfectly obvious that the Bhoodan movement had expended itself already by the end of 1956.

Even in the earliest years of the movement it could be seen that the gifts of land had no effect on the concentra-

<sup>216</sup> See, for instance, Jagdish Saran Sharma, *Vinoba and Bhoo-dan: A Selected Descriptive Bibliography of Bhoo-dan in Hindi, English and other Indian Languages* (Indian National Congress, New Delhi).

<sup>217</sup> See P. D. Tandon (Ed.): *Vinoba Bhave, The Man and His Mission* (Vora and Co., Bombay) and *Bhoo-dan as Seen by the West* (Sarvodaya Prachuralayam, Tanjore).

<sup>218</sup> Suresh Rambhai, *Vinoba and His Mission*, pp. 90, 120, 153; *The Thirteenth Year of Freedom, 1959-60* (All-India Congress Committee, New Delhi), p. 69; *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, p. 272.

tion of land with the landlord class. The landlords regarded their participation in the Bhoodan movement purely as publicity. It is interesting that in the districts of Champaran, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Patna and Saharsa in Bihar State, which are thickly populated and in which land-hunger is acutely felt due to the particularly high concentration of land, the land donated in 1952-54 came to about one acre per donor.<sup>219</sup>

Curiously enough, Bhoodan propaganda was addressed not only to landlords, but to peasants as well.<sup>220</sup> Vinoba Bhave himself confirmed this in a conversation with the Soviet Indologist Y. P. Nassenko when they met in a village in Mysore in 1957.<sup>221</sup>

It is not accidental that there had been even poor peasants among the land donors. It was to reinforce the propaganda that social and political equality had been attained in the Indian village. This aspect of Vinoba Bhave's appeal is summed up by Suresh Rambhai as follows:

This is an age of friendly love or brotherly equality. The days of lording over ryots and serfs have gone for good. India is free. The poorest man has one vote like the richest or the tallest. The poor man is the real ruler who can make and unmake ministries and the rest. Now when power rests with the poor, ownership cannot rest with a handful of rich.<sup>222</sup>

Contributing a lot to the decline of the Bhoodan movement were the abuses by landlords who donated land. Thus, it should be mentioned that a good part of the land received proved unfit for cultivation,<sup>223</sup> and some of it was 'donated' at the expense of its actual owners.<sup>224</sup> The newspaper

<sup>219</sup> Suresh Rambhai, *Progress of a Pilgrimage*, p. 283.

<sup>220</sup> Suresh Rambhai, *Vinoba and His Mission*, p. 219.

<sup>221</sup> Y. Nassenko, 'Acharya Vinoba i dvizheniye bhudan' (Acharya Vinoba and the Bhoodan Movement), *Azia i Afrika segodnya* (Asia and Africa Today), 1961, No. 11, p. 30.

<sup>222</sup> Suresh Rambhai, *Vinoba and His Mission*, pp. 219-220.

<sup>223</sup> According to official data, 75 per cent of the Bhoodan land in Uttar Pradesh [ASI, vol. X, No. 8 (November 1955), p. 602].

<sup>224</sup> See: *AICC Economic Review*, vol. VI, No. 14 (15 November 1954), p. 17; vol. VI, No. 23, 1 April 1955), p. 17.

*Rashtravani*, wrote the following about such 'land donations' in Bihar: 'The purpose of Raja Kamakhya Narain Singh's donation is nothing but self-advertisement because the lands he has donated had ceased to belong to him.'<sup>225</sup>

Here and there the 'donations' turned out to be plain frauds. The weekly *Blitz* had an interesting report on this matter.

Nine thousand acres of land [it wrote] was contributed to the Bhoodan Samiti by landowners in Lucknow district in the last three years. Only 100 acres are now traceable, according to a survey conducted by the Uttar Pradesh Bhoodan Samiti in Lucknow district in the last two months.<sup>226</sup>

Such a state of affairs hindered the distribution of the Bhoodan land. By the close of 1957 Bhave's followers had received in donations more than 4,400,000 acres, but only some 654,000 acres were distributed among 200,000 families,<sup>227</sup> and by the beginning of 1961 the total distributed amounted to only 872,609 acres.<sup>228</sup> It goes without saying that the Bhoodan movement cannot solve the land-hunger problem of India's peasantry, and both the proponents and opponents of the movement know this perfectly well.

As far back as 1951, Vinobaji stated:

My target is 50 million acres of land. Since there are 300 million acres of cultivated land in India and an average family has five members, I felt that every family could give away one-sixth of its landholding, accepting the poor landless man as the sixth member of the family. This is a way of bringing about a peaceful revolution in the country.<sup>229</sup>

However, already in the first years of the movement it could not but become clear that the idea was nothing but an utopia, and searches were begun for a new form for the movement.

<sup>225</sup> Citation from an article by Girija Kumar Sinha, 'The Bhoodan Movement in Bihar,' *New Age*, vol. III, No. 6 (June 1954), p. 69.

<sup>226</sup> *Blitz*, 12 November 1955.

<sup>227</sup> *India, 1958: A Reference Annual*, p. 286.

<sup>228</sup> *India, 1961: A Reference Annual*, p. 272.

<sup>229</sup> Vinoba Bhave, *Bhoodan Yajna*, p. 21.

The end of 1955 marked the beginning of the next phase of the movement, namely, the Gramdan ('donation of village') movement. The new form of the movement declared that all the land in the village was declared to be 'God's,' 'no one's' land, that it belonged to everybody in the village collectively. That, however, does not mean that substantial changes have taken place in the actual class relations within such villages. It is characteristic that this movement has not been as successful as the comparatively successful Bhoojan movement. In Orissa, where this movement originated, in 1956 (to be exact on 15 December) it embraced 1,575 villages, of which 1,226 were in out-of-the-way places in most backward mountain and forest areas in the former princely state of Koraput.<sup>230</sup> A year later, the number of villages embraced by the movement passed the 3,000 mark, of which 1,933 were in Orissa, 258 in Madras, 270 in Andhra, 340 in Bombay, and 451 in Kerala. Vinoba undertook a tour of these states during his campaign.<sup>231</sup> This movement can forge ahead, and actually did, mainly in villages in which there is as yet no great disparity in property and no sharp class differentiation such as in the very poor communities of untouchables and aboriginal tribes in Orissa which Bhave picked for propagating his ideas. But even in Orissa, where the movement embraced 1,575 villages, by the end of 1956 the land was reallocated in only 602 villages.<sup>232</sup> This picture did not change materially in subsequent years.<sup>233</sup>

True, in the Gramdan villages where the land had been redistributed, and where through the efforts of devoted workers of the movement all-round activity had been carried on for village uplift, there was some change in the social relations and initial progress was achieved in raising the

<sup>230</sup> Manmohan Choudhuri, *The Gramdan Movement* (Cuttack, 1956), p. 2.

<sup>231</sup> *India, 1953: A Reference Annual*, p. 287.

<sup>232</sup> *One for All and All for One* (Cuttack), p. 1.

<sup>233</sup> See: *Gramdan in Koraput: A Broad Outline of the Method of Approach Adopted for Gramdan Work in Koraput (Orissa)*, Issued by the Office of the Secretary A. B. Sarva Seva Sangh, Jeypore (Koraput), Orissa, p. 12.

material and cultural standard of the rural population.<sup>234</sup> But this judgement holds good only for the 100 surveyed villages in Koraput inhabited by aborigines, among whom class stratification has not reached the same degree as in villages in the principal regions of the country. What has taken place in the rest of the Gramdan villages (at the end of 1960 they were altogether 4,643, including 1,946 in Orissa, 603 in Maharashtra, 543 in Kerala and 483 in Andhra Pradesh)<sup>235</sup> is difficult to judge because of the lack of data.

One thing is certain, that by the logic of events honest active workers of the Bhoojan movement necessarily will join in the struggle between the peasants and landlords. Highly interesting in this respect is the decision taken, according to press reports, by the leaders of the Tamilnad Sarvodaya Mandal at the beginning of 1961 'to start satyagraha against landlords who refused to cooperate in Gramdan villages and went back on their promises to donate land'.<sup>236</sup>

In 1957, Vinoba Bhave wrote:

If I cannot get land by persuasion and love, I thought that I should have faith in the Communists and should follow them. If this Sarvodaya method is not possible it will have to be accepted that communism alone can achieve the objective.<sup>237</sup>

The ten years of the history of the Bhoojan and Gramdan movement should make Bhave's sincere followers ponder over these words of his.

The National Congress and the government have given the Bhoojan and Gramdan movement every support. By now most of the States have passed legislation placing the collection of donations of land and its distribution under the control of the administrative bodies, and regularising the appropriation of money for its expenses.

<sup>234</sup> See: A. W. Sahasrabudhe, *Report on Koraput Gramdans, 1956-1959* (A.B. Sarva Seva Sangh, Sevagram, Wardha).

<sup>235</sup> India, 1961: *A Reference Annual*, p. 272.

<sup>236</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, 4 January 1961; 9 January 1961.

<sup>237</sup> Acharya Vinoba Bhave, 'Communism and Sarvodaya,' *New Age*, vol. VI, No. 10 (October 1957), p. 44.

Although the All-India Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India from the very outset have been critical of the movement, they have been friendly to it.<sup>238</sup> While explaining to the peasants that Bhoojan cannot solve the land problem in India, the local workers of the Sabha nevertheless have spoken in support of distribution of the land, and insisted that land donations should be handled honestly and the land received should be actually redistributed among the landless and land-poor peasants and agricultural labourers.

While the Bhoojan and Gramdan movement has created certain illusions among the peasants, namely, that the land question can be solved without class struggle, it has at the same time to a certain extent stimulated political and other public activity by the peasant masses and has created a favourable atmosphere for political propaganda and agitation for redistribution of the land, for abolition of private ownership of land and for the development of agricultural producers' cooperatives.<sup>239</sup>

<sup>238</sup> See: Resolution on Bhoojan Yagna, adopted by the Central Kisan Council at its Delhi Session in 1953, *Cross Roads*, 19 July 1953.

<sup>239</sup> See: E. M. S. Namboodiripad, 'Sarvodaya and Communism,' *New Age*, vol. VII, No. 1 (January 1958), pp. 46-55.

## CHAPTER III

# Reform of the System of Land Cultivation

### *Tenancy Legislation*

THE agrarian reforms not only failed to solve the land question through abolition of landlordism and redistribution of the land to the tillers of the soil; they did not even completely eliminate the semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry. According to data cited in the 8th Round of the National Sample Survey, in 1953-54, 20.34 per cent of the cultivated land was held under leases.<sup>1</sup> The same survey showed that the principal lessors were big landholders. While for India as a whole only 12.03 per cent of total rural households owning land leased it out, for the 30-50 acre grade of household ownership holdings it was 28.07 per cent, and for the over 50 acre grade it was 36.26 per cent.<sup>2</sup> It is instructive that these two highest groups, which made up altogether 3.31 per cent of the rural households leasing out land, accounted for 40.13 per cent of the total leased out area.<sup>3</sup>

A Census of Landholding and Cultivation taken during approximately the same years for different States also showed that the principal lessors were the big landholders (see Table 13).

We are not going to analyse here how far the data cited reflect the real state of affairs, whether or not they understate things. For the time being it suffices to state that peasants continue to lease fairly large areas from landlords.

<sup>1</sup> *The National Sample Survey*, No. 30, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 36, p. 29, Table 6.7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28, Table 6.6.

TABLE 13.

## Percentage of Area Leased Out to Total Area Owned

State	A. Higher grades of holdings in acres			B. All grades	Percentage of A to B	
	30-40	40-60	60-100		100+	
<b>Andhra</b>						
1. Former Andhra area	7.6	8.9	10.8	20.5	8.6	47.9
2. Telengana area	9.9	10.6	11.2	26.9	13.5	70.8
<b>Gujarat and Maharashtra</b>						
	11.5	11.6	14.0	30.8	15.0	48.0
<b>Madhya Pradesh</b>						
	5.7	6.4	7.5	12.8	—	45.0
<b>Madras</b>						
	9.7	12.1	15.3	29.2	9.7	54.3
<b>Kerala</b>						
1. Travancore-Cochin*	25.8		48.2		11.0	48.1
2. Malabar	3.6	3.5	4.8	8.6	3.3	75.3
<b>Rajasthan</b>						
1. Former Rajas than*	17.7	21.6	35.6	49.0	17.8	61.4
2. Ajmer area	2.1	3.1	1.3	2.4	1.7	21.2
<b>Uttar Pradesh*</b>						
	0.4	1.5	8.0	6.0	1.1	29.6

Source: *Third Year Plan*, pp. 241-49.

\* Where enumeration was on a sample basis.

That being the case, all States in the course of the last decade passed laws regulating tenancy relations.<sup>4</sup> The chief purpose of tenancy legislation was claimed to be to secure the rights of occupancy (heritable) tenancy to the tenants to protect them from eviction from the leased plots and to fix maximum rates of rent payable. The legislation also provided for the right of tenants under certain conditions to acquire ownership of their plots.

In colonial India there were two principal categories of tenants: those enjoying the rights of protected tenants, or

<sup>4</sup> The author made use of the following publication of tenancy Acts: *Agricultural Legislation in India*, vol. VI; *Land Reforms (Reforms in Tenancy)*, (Delhi, 1955). In addition, he made use of separate publications of some Tenancy Acts mentioned below.

occupancy tenants, and tenants whose rights were not even nominally defined by law, or tenants-at-will. Belonging to the first category were most of the tenants in zamindari areas and a small per cent of tenants in ryotwari areas, and belonging to the second category were subtenants, sir tenants and some small groups of tenants of raiyati lands in zamindari areas and the bulk of tenants in ryotwari areas. In each State tenants of the first category comprised several juridical groups with different tenancy rights.

Tenancy legislation in India since World War II has extended the segment of tenants possessing the rights of occupancy; these rights were conferred on tenants in the former princely states and ryotwari areas, also on subtenants of sir lands in zamindari areas in the States that formerly were Provinces of British India. However, even after the legislation had been enacted many tenants did not get these rights.

Firstly, the considerable category of cropsharing tenants (sajhis in Uttar Pradesh) were 'not recognized' by the law as tenants, which was quite illegal. Despite the fact that subletting was prohibited by law in that State, a pilot survey conducted in eight villages of western Uttar Pradesh in 1954-55 by the Agricultural Economics Research Section of the Delhi School of Economics showed that tenancy continued to play a considerable role in the forms of land tenure (see Table 14).

Dr S. C. Gupta of the University of Delhi found roughly the same picture in his survey in 1955-56 of Shamaspur village in the Saharanpur district in Uttar Pradesh: cropsharing covered about 12.0 per cent of the total land in this village.<sup>5</sup>

A survey of six villages in different districts of Uttar Pradesh was conducted in 1956 by a group of members of the staff of Lucknow University. Dr Baljit Singh, who headed the group, noted that subletting or cropsharing varied in extent in the villages surveyed. In some 'it is almost insignificant', but in Barhan village (Agra district)

<sup>5</sup> S. C. Gupta, *An Economic Survey of Shamaspur Village*, p. 30.

TABLE 14

## Percentage of Land Leased

Name of Village	Ratio of land taken and given on lease to total land in cultivating possession	Ratio of land on cropshare to total land under their cultivating control
Jalalabad	12.0	14.4
Deosa	4.1	11.6
Abupur	36.5	5.6
Ukhlarsi	16.4	3.5
Barka	22.1	9.8
Rasulpur	15.5	13.7
Kaneni	13.8	4.7
Kalupura	14.5	7.6

- Source: Mukherjee and Gupta, *A Pilot Survey of Fourteen Villages in UP and Punjab*, pp. 29, 55.

35 per cent of the total land was leased out.<sup>6</sup>

The sample agro-economic surveys of a number of villages conducted in Uttar Pradesh have shown that there exists a veiled, at times fairly large, cropsharing tenancy, and yet this type of tenancy is not regulated by law at all. At times it represents the worst form of semi-feudal exploitation of the actual tillers of the soil.

Secondly, although in some States the relations between individual groups of tenants and landowners have become the subject of special tenancy legislation, these tenants failed to get the main thing which determines their status, namely, permanent and heritable tenancy rights. Thus, the most exploited and poorest stratum of tenants, the cropsharers, the bargadars in Bengal, and the adhiars in Assam,<sup>7</sup> like the sajehdars in Uttar Pradesh, found themselves in the worst position.

<sup>6</sup> Baljit Singh, *Next Step in Village India*, pp. 120-23.

<sup>7</sup> See: Government of West Bengal, Legislative Department, *West Bengal Act II of 1950. The West Bengal Bargadars Act, 1950, as Modified up to the First February, 1955* (Alipore, 1955), p. 3, cl. 5; *The Assam Adhiars Protection and Regulation Act, 1948* (cl. 5); *Agricultural Legislation in India*, vol. VI, p. 28.

Thirdly, in some States like Andhra and Madras, tenants were given occupancy rights only for a certain period, but not permanently.

Fourthly, in some States tenants received permanent occupancy rights if they had cultivated the leased land continuously for a long period. In Assam and Bihar, for instance, the period is twelve years.

Neither did the new tenancy legislation eliminate the variety of legal rights of the tenants. In many States there can still be found groups of tenants possessing different kinds of rights established by law in respect of alienating and inheriting leased plots, rentals, and so on.

Tenancy legislation thus has not protected the peasants from the threat of ejection nor secured to a considerable part of them the rights of occupancy tenancy. The tenancy laws themselves essentially have reserved to the land-holders the right to evict tenants from the land. This right stems from the shift of landowners into 'operating their farms themselves,' i.e., cultivation of the land by hired labour, and in some States, as in Uttar Pradesh, by crop-sharers. Landlords and rich peasants have made use of this right and in the past 10 years they evicted tenants wholesale, on a scale without parallel in the history of India.

The weekly *New Age*, for instance, wrote the following about the situation in the Punjab: 'Alarming reports regarding eviction notice served on the tenants are being received from every district in the Punjab. The total number of such notices can easily be estimated at over a lakh and a half.'<sup>8</sup> It is no mere chance, therefore, that some years later the Punjab Legislature passed the Punjab Security of Land Tenures (Amendment) Act, 1958, which stipulated several measures to check eviction of tenants by landlords in future.

The threat of eviction constantly hangs over the head of the tenants. A survey of the condition of tenants in nine districts of Gujarat showed that in some (Banaskantha, Mehsana, Kaira and Surat) more than ten per cent of the

<sup>8</sup> *New Age*, 6 December 1953.

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tenants interviewed reported that they were threatened with eviction. Prof M. B. Desai, author of the report on the survey correctly stated: 'It is indicative of the sense of insecurity prevalent among the tenantry.'<sup>9</sup>

According to data as on the close of 1957, tenancy legislation categorically prohibiting the eviction of peasant tenants from the land was in effect only on 9 per cent of the area under cultivation.<sup>10</sup>

The struggle against eviction was one of the main aspects of the peasant movement in India in the period under review. The aggravation of agrarian contradictions forced the governments of individual States—Hyderabad and Madras, for instance—to issue special ordinances from time to time, prohibiting the eviction of tenants within a certain period. At the end of 1957 operation of these ordinances extended over 12 per cent of the area under cultivation.<sup>11</sup> These half measures, however, could not halt, nor was it their purpose to halt, the process of social and economic movement of which we shall now dwell briefly.

Eviction of occupancy tenants from the land means at the same time the loss of occupancy tenancy, and that is why surveys of the results of operation of tenancy legislation conducted in some areas in 1955-56 showed that the process had resulted in a drop in the number of tenants possessing the rights of occupancy tenancy. Dr A. M. Khusro's survey data show that between 1951 and 1955, 42 per cent of occupancy tenants were evicted.<sup>12</sup> In some of the Bombay districts which were investigated only 57 per cent of occupancy tenants still retained in 1953 their rights to

<sup>9</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry into the Working of the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Land Act, 1948 (as Amended up to (1953) in Gujarat (excluding Barda District)* (Bombay, The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics), p. 75.

<sup>10</sup> *India, 1958: A Reference Annual*, p. 281: It should be mentioned that the Kerala State Government formed in 1957 by the Communist Party of India promptly upon taking office prohibited by law the ejectment of tenants from the land.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281.

<sup>12</sup> A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition*, p. 48.

the plots they cultivated in 1949,<sup>13</sup> and to 60 per cent of the land which they held as tenants in 1949.<sup>14</sup> Other data showed that the total number of occupancy tenants in Bombay dropped by 20 per cent between 1948 and 1951, and in Hyderabad by 57 per cent between 1952 and 1955.<sup>15</sup>

According to the field investigations conducted in Gujarat under the direction of Prof M. B. Desai, while the percentage of leased area under non-protected tenancy in 1952-53 was 30 per cent for the Province as a whole, it was 100 per cent in Banaskantha district, 55 per cent in Sabarkantha, 43 per cent in Mehsana, and 40 per cent in Ahmedabad district.<sup>16</sup>

All the reports of the inquiries into the effect of the agrarian legislation recorded facts of mass-scale evictions of tenants. This, I dare say, is admitted by everyone who has at all objectively studied the problem of tenancy and landlord-tenant relations in postwar India.

What should be stressed is something else, namely, that the eviction of tenants accompanied the implementation of the agrarian legislation. As stated in Chapter II, during the period in which preparations were made to implement the zamindari abolition acts, the landlords carried through a mass eviction of tenants with the object of extending their sir lands. A similar effect was produced also by the following round of land reform legislation—imposition of ceiling. Highly noteworthy in this respect is the example of West Bengal. In that State, after the implementation of the West Bengal Act X of 1956 had begun, the jotedars started an intensive drive for mass ejectments of bargadars. Analysing the methods used by Bengal landlords to evade the law, Bhowani Sen, a leader of the peasant movement and an expert on agrarian problems, correctly concluded, that 'the statutory provisions for ceiling for the distribution

<sup>13</sup> V. M. Dandekar, G. J. Khudanpur, *Working of Bombay Tenancy Act, 1948: Report of Investigation* (Poona, 1957), p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> *Reports of the Committees of the Panel on Land Reforms*, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. 65.

of surplus land to the landless turns into its opposite and becomes the legal vehicle for mass evictions of the share-croppers.<sup>17</sup> As noted in the official publication of the All-India Congress Committee, 'various representations were made to the government in the latter part of 1958 regarding the problem of eviction of bargadars'.<sup>18</sup>

But the chief instrument the landowners used to evict tenants was the tenancy legislation. All tenancy acts contain provisions for the right of resumption of leased land by landlords. True, a limit of resumable land has been fixed, but it is rather high. In Assam, for instance, it is 33 1/3 acres, in Orissa 99, and so on. Besides, while big landowners had to leave tenants the prescribed minimum landholding (which in Assam is 3 1/3 acres, in Orissa 21 acres, and so on), small landowners were given the right to resume the total leased out area.

In fact the tenancy legislation gave the landlords and rich peasants the right 'legally' to evict tenants. The legal ground for it is the transition of the landowner to 'self-cultivation.' And the landowners, as has been shown by the above-mentioned investigations, made extensive use of these provisions of the tenancy acts. It is indicative that of the 67 tenants interviewed in Baroda district of Gujarat, between 1949-50 and 1953-54, 61 had surrendered the possession of land on the ground of landlords' demands of land for self-cultivation. According to the same data, of the 68 landlords interviewed, 64 took possession of land for self-cultivation.<sup>19</sup>

Besides making use of the legal possibilities for evicting tenants, the landlords have used direct pressure to force them 'voluntarily surrender' their tenure of the plots held by them. A sample survey conducted in Hyderabad showed

<sup>17</sup> Bhowani Sen, "Struggle for Ceiling in West Bengal," *New Age*, vol. VIII, No. 7 (July 1959), p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> *The Twelfth Year of Freedom: 1958-59* (All-India Congress Committee, New Delhi), p. 331.

<sup>19</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects of the Working of the Tenancy Legislation in the Baroda District of Bombay State* (Baroda, 1958), pp. 24-25.

that by 1955, 40.5 per cent of occupancy tenants had been driven off the land in this way.<sup>20</sup> According to another survey conducted by the government of Hyderabad, 76.89 per cent of the cases of dispossession of tenants took place on the basis of surrenders of land to the landlords.<sup>21</sup> The so-called voluntary surrenders were the chief reason for evictions in Gujarat, too. While, according to data compiled by the Revenue Department, Government of Bombay, the area surrendered by the tenants between 1952 and 1955 amounted to 116,905 acres, the area dispossessed under Section 14 of the Bombay Tenancy Act, 1948 (in the case of failure of tenant to pay rent, subletting the land, etc.), amounted to only 14,386.<sup>22</sup>

The plot of land is either used by the landlord to operate a farm of his own or to lease it out again but no longer as an occupancy tenancy. In the former case, a shift to direct capitalist farming is observed. It is of interest to note that in Bombay 70 per cent of the land from which the landowners evicted tenants by taking advantage of the Tenancy Act was used by the landlords to operate farms of their own.<sup>23</sup> In 56.98 per cent of all cases of resumption of land by the landowners in Hyderabad, the lands thus resumed were self-cultivated.<sup>24</sup>

● A sample survey conducted in Berar showed that in consequence of the eviction of tenants the percentage of area under lease dropped from 28 per cent to 8 between 1951 and 1956.<sup>25</sup> Dr A. M. Khusro found in the villages in which he conducted surveys a drop of 15 per cent in the areas under lease.<sup>26</sup> Between 1948-49 and 1953-54, the area

<sup>20</sup> A. M. Khusro, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> Bhujang Rao Kulkarni, 'Eviction of Protected Tenants in Hyderabad: Results of an Enquiry,' *AICC Economic Review*, vol. VII, Nos. 8-9 (15 August), p. 85.

<sup>22</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, pp. 66, 69.

<sup>23</sup> V. M. Dandekar and G. J. Khudanpur, *Working of Bombay Tenancy Act*, p. 90.

<sup>24</sup> Bhujang Rao Kulkarni, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>25</sup> M. K. Shingarey, 'Effects of Recent Tenancy Legislation in Berar: A Case Study,' *The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. XII, No. 2 (April-June 1957), p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> A. M. Khusro, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

under tenancy in Baroda district decreased roughly by 35 per cent.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time some of the land was leased out again, usually on a cropsharing basis. In some Bombay districts in which a survey was conducted it was found that on 65 per cent of the land still under lease after occupancy tenants had been evicted rent was collected under the cropsharing system.<sup>28</sup> A survey conducted in Songad taluk, Surat district in Bombay, showed that half the land from which occupancy tenants had been evicted was later leased out again.<sup>29</sup> The same practice, namely, of landlords after resuming land under the pretext of 'self-cultivation' leasing it out to new tenants, was observed, in the course of an inquiry, in Baroda district and in Hyderabad State.<sup>30</sup>

This trend, however, does not contradict the trend toward a direct shift to capitalist farming. The shift to crop-sharing, in its turn, signifies an intermediate stage in the development of capitalist farming, since the different forms of cropsharing tenancy the semi-feudal tenants are slowly being converted, through forms of 'non-proletarian impoverishment,' into agricultural labourers.<sup>31</sup>

It is important to note that the shift to cropsharing presupposes the loss of occupancy tenancy rights since under the law occupancy tenants, as a rule, have to pay their rent in cash. The rise in unprotected leases has always been

<sup>27</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> V. M. Dandekar, G. J. Khudanpur, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> B. S. Mavinkurve, 'Effectiveness of Provisions in the Tenancy Legislation for Security of Tenure to the Tenant,' *The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. XIII, No. 2 (April-June 1957), p. 159.

<sup>30</sup> Bhujang Rao Kulkarni, *op. cit.*, p. 86; V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. E. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the effects*, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> This is dealt with in greater detail in the author's *Arenda i arendniye otnosheniya v Tamilnade (Juzhnaya India) v 1919-1939 gg.* [Tenancy and Tenancy Relations in Tamilnad (South India) in 1917-1939]; *Ucheniye Zapiski Institute, Vostokovedeniya* (Transactions of the Institute of Oriental Studies), vol. XII (Moscow, 1955).

accompanied by a rise in the percentage of cropsharing in the forms of rent.<sup>32</sup>

Tenancy legislation, thus, did not secure firm occupancy rights to all tenants. Prof Desai wrote that 'on the whole, the study points out to the prevalence of considerable insecurity and uncertainty among the tenantry owing to a large shift in the area under tenancy in favour of owner cultivation during the period 1949-50 to 1952-53. The tenancy legislation was largely ineffective in checking evictions of protected tenants, especially in North Gujarat.'<sup>33</sup> The same picture continued in the following years, too. Dr A. M. Khusro rightly noted in 1960 that 'eviction of tenants has been the rule in almost all the States.'<sup>34</sup>

The observations of the individual investigators coincide with the Planning Commission's conclusion:

In a number of States ejection of tenants have taken place on a considerable scale under the plea of 'voluntary surrenders'. Two main recommendations on this subject were made in the Second Plan. The first was that voluntary surrenders by tenants of lands held by them should not be regarded as valid unless they were duly registered by the revenue authorities. Secondly, in the event of surrender of tenancy the landowner should be entitled to take possession of land only to the extent of his right of resumption permitted by law. On the whole, both legislation and administrative actions have fallen short of these recommendations.<sup>35</sup>

The ultimate purpose of tenancy legislation as formulated in the First and Second Five Year Plans was gradually to have tenants become the owners of the land cultivated by them. Most tenancy laws, therefore, gave tenants the right to buy all or part of their plots. According to data for 1956 the compensation differed in different States: in some it was based on the rental paid (Madhya Pradesh,

<sup>32</sup> As, for instance, in the Punjab and Bengal in 1900-1940.

<sup>33</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, pp. iii-iv.

<sup>34</sup> A. M. Khusro, 'Agriculture and Structural Change,' *AICC Economic Review*, vol. XI, Nos. 16-18 (16 January 1960), p. 115.

<sup>35</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 224.

Uttar Pradesh, Ajmer, among them), in others it was based on the land revenue assessment (Bombay, Delhi, and others). In some States it was fixed at a certain per cent of the market value of land (as, for instance, in the Punjab, Kutch and Hyderabad). The rates of compensation fixed were pretty high: in Bombay, for example, it was equal to 200 times the land revenue assessment, in the Punjab to 75 per cent of the average market value of land in the last 10 years, and so on.

We tried to show, by offering Saurashtra as an illustration, that even where the rates were lower than those mentioned above, the bulk of the peasantry was unable to acquire ownership rights; in this case, too, it was only the wealthy tenants that could do so. This is confirmed by the sample surveys conducted in recent years in several districts. The survey conducted by Dr A. M. Khusro showed that by 1954-55 only 12 per cent of tenants who had received the rights of occupancy in Hyderabad in 1951 were able to pay for their plots, which made up 15 per cent of the total leased area in the villages surveyed.<sup>36</sup> The author of the survey admitted that in the main it was the rich peasant tenants who availed themselves of the opportunity.<sup>37</sup> In the Bombay districts which were investigated between 1948-49 and 1952-53 full compensation paid by tenants covered only three per cent of the total land leased.<sup>38</sup>

Highly significant in this respect are the results of the investigations conducted in Gujarat. Of the 770 tenants interviewed all over Gujarat by a group of investigators directed by Prof M. B. Desai, only 17 had bought land either from their landlords or from other landowners. Yet 80 per cent of the tenants interviewed expressed their willingness to buy land, but this did not materialize because of the

<sup>36</sup> A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition*, pp. 42, 48.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> V. M. Dandekar, G. J. Khudanpur, *Working of Bombay Tenancy Act*, p. 109.

extreme poverty of most of the tenants.<sup>39</sup> Prof Desai wrote that 'out of the 80 offers which the tenants could not accept, 60 were due to lack of finance.... Only about 3.4 per cent of the tenants were in a position to buy outright.'<sup>40</sup> Highly interesting is the fact that the findings were similar in the inquiry conducted in Baroda district. Of the 248 tenants interviewed 21 were offered land on sale by their landlords, but none of them bought land, mainly because of lack of means.<sup>41</sup> Yet 74.6 per cent of the 248 tenants were willing to purchase land.<sup>42</sup>

As has been pointed out earlier, the purchase price demanded for the land was very high. Besides, with land-hunger acute and with competition for every plot of land offered for sale, buyers, of course, had to pay the prevailing market rate and not the price fixed by law. Highly indicative in this respect is the following observation in the Report by Prof M. B. Desai: 'In fact, only a small number of tenants (about 13 per cent) knew that the Mamlatdar was to be referred to for fixation of price of land offered for sale.'<sup>43</sup>

All these facts testify that the declared goal of tenancy legislation 'to confer rights of ownership on as large a body of tenants as possible'<sup>44</sup> has not been achieved.

True, in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi States ownership rights were transferred to about 1.5 million subtenants and tenants of sir lands.<sup>45</sup> But this process is the natural completion of implementation of zamindari abolition acts. As regards tenancy legislation proper, its effect has been that tenants have lost more land than they have acquired, or, in other words, the increase in peasant ownership has been swallowed up and more by the drop of peasant landholding on conditions of tenancy. In Gujarat, for instance,

<sup>39</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. 64.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects*, p. 33.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. 64.

<sup>44</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 227.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

between 1948 and 1955, excluding the years 1950 and 1951, tenants purchased 0.8 per cent of the leased land from the landlords, but lost as a result of resumptions by the landlords 1.5 per cent of the leased land.<sup>46</sup> A similar situation appears to be developing in other States too.

Let us see how far the provisions of tenancy legislation relating to restriction of semi-feudal exploitation of the peasants have been enforced.

Under the recommendations of the First Five Year Plan, rates of rent were not to exceed 20-25 per cent of the value of the crop. By 1957 the said maximum rates had actually been fixed by law in most of the States, but in some States the old higher rates prevail: in the Punjab (including former Pepsu), and in some districts in Mysore and Bombay (former Kutch) it is equal to a third of the crop, and in Andhra, West Bengal and Kashmir to half the crop.

This situation has not changed. As pointed out in the Third Five Year Plan,

In several States, the normal level of rent is still about a third of the produce. It is to be hoped that in these States rents will be reduced to the level envisaged in the first two plans so as to facilitate more rapid improvement in the economic conditions of tenants.<sup>47</sup>

Of course, the enactment of tenancy laws providing for a reduction in the rates of rent to one-sixth of the produce is in the conditions prevailing in India a step forward in improvement of the condition of tenants.

Actually, however, these clauses in tenancy legislation are not, as a rule, enforced. In the Hyderabad villages which were surveyed the average rental rate is double the legal maximum,<sup>48</sup> and in the Bombay districts the legal rent was collected on only 18.4 per cent of leased land.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. 63.

<sup>47</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 222.

<sup>48</sup> A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition*, pp. 23, 103.

<sup>49</sup> V. M. Dandekar, G. J. Khudanpur, *Working of Bombay Tenancy Act*, p. 120.

True, in the Foreword to the *Report on an Enquiry into the Working of the Bombay Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, 1948*, Prof Desai says regarding Gujarat:

In respect of levels of rent, though there were marked regional variations, there has been a tendency for rents in the long run to conform more or less to what is laid down in the Act and this seems to be a good sign for the improvement of landlord-tenant relations.<sup>50</sup>

However, the data collected during the field investigations conducted under his guidance contradict such an optimistic conclusion. It has been found that in the surveyed districts the rent paid on some 60 per cent of the land cultivated under tenancy was on the average higher than the rate fixed by law. The proportion of the tenancy agreements too was approximately the same.<sup>51</sup> An inquiry conducted in Baroda district showed that during the period 1948-49 to 1953-54 the rent of 31.9 per cent of tenants interviewed was reduced, of 5.2 per cent was increased, and there was no change in the rent of 60.5 per cent.<sup>52</sup> The Report says:

Seventy nine out of the total of 248 tenants reported that they were at present paying only one-sixth of the gross produce by way of rent and thus apparently conformed to the provisions under the Act. Yet we have reason to believe that, in at least 19 cases out of the 79, the tenants' statements regarding the level of the rent were not quite reliable. Our investigators were informed in off-the-record talk that in those cases the rent continues to be what was conventional as before and that the tenants' statement were tutored.<sup>53</sup>

A similar situation was observed in other regions. The Indian economists B. Misra and B. Jena, who investigated tenancy relations in Orissa, arrived at the conclusion that although in 1947 the law fixed the maximum rental at a

<sup>50</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. iv.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

<sup>52</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects*, p. 30.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

quarter of the crop, in 1955 the average rent for the Province was equal to half the crop.<sup>54</sup>

It should be mentioned that different groups of tenants were able to take advantage differently of the provisions of tenancy legislation envisaging lower rates of rent. The bigger tenants are in the best position. To illustrate, in Baroda during the period 1948-49 to 1953-54 only 15 per cent of the tenants cultivating less than five acres had their rate of rent reduced, while of the tenants cultivating from five to 20 acres it was 33 per cent, and of those cultivating more than 20 acres it was roughly 63 per cent.<sup>55</sup> In Kodinar taluk (Gujarat), where tenants enjoyed better cropsharing conditions than in other Gujarat villages investigated by teams under the guidance of Prof Desai, Kolhatkar and Mahabal, in the 'big' farmers group a rent equal to one-sixth of the produce was paid on 45.1 per cent of the area, and one equal to half of the produce was paid on 0.3 per cent of area, while in the 'small' farmers group it was 33.4 and 9.8 per cent respectively.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the bulk of the data obtained from the inquiry into the working of the tenancy legislation in different parts of the country shows, to quote Dr Khusro, that 'the machinery to reduce rents has seldom been invoked.'<sup>57</sup> The conclusions arrived at by investigators individually were confirmed by the general conclusion arrived at by the first Panel on Land Reforms, which stated in 1956:

We noticed along our tours that in spite of a new legislation on the statute book, in the field the old practice still obtains. Tenancies continue to be governed by custom or agreement. Old rents still continue to be paid

<sup>54</sup> B. Misra and B. Jena, 'Working of Two Recent Tenancy Laws in Orissa,' *The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*, vol. xii, No. 2 (April-June 1957), p. 119.

<sup>55</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects*, p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> C. N. Shah, *Problems of Small Farmers: Report on an Enquiry into the Problems of Low-Income Farmers in Kodinar Taluka* (The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay), p. 64.

<sup>57</sup> A. M. Khusro, *Agriculture and Structural Change*, p. 115.

and accepted though law has scaled them down in many areas and the receipts of higher rent is illegal.<sup>58</sup>

Since then another five years have passed, but in 1961, too, the Planning Commission has come to the very pessimistic conclusion that 'thus, in many ways, despite the legislation, the scales are weighted in favour of the continuance of existing terms and conditions.'<sup>59</sup>

As we have endeavoured to show in Chapter I of this work, the rent level was determined by two basic economic factors: firstly, by the fact that the peasantry were landless or land-poor, on the one hand, and by the concentration of the land in the hands of the landlords and upper stratum of the peasantry, on the other, and, secondly, by the relative agrarian over-population. These factors have continued to operate since the agrarian reforms were put through, too. The actual economic and political relationships today in the Indian village favour higher rents rather than lower.

Interesting in this respect is Dr Khusro's conclusion. He found that the machinery for fixing fair rents on land was not functioning. Things have been left to mere market conditions (in other words, the peasant competition around the plots of land available for leasing) rather than to official settlement.<sup>60</sup>

There is a direct connection between the conferring of occupancy rights on tenants and the fixing of lower rates of rent. Jagjit Singh Lyallpuri was perfectly right in stating in the *Report on the Progress of Land Reforms in India*, that 'so long as the tenants do not enjoy complete security of tenure rents cannot be regulated.'<sup>61</sup>

Highly interesting in this connection are the data obtained in the different surveys, showing that most of the tenants interviewed had only oral agreements with the landowners. In the investigated villages of Gujarat only 'in about 16

<sup>58</sup> *Reports of the Committees of the Panel on Land Reforms*, p. 37.

<sup>59</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 223.

<sup>60</sup> A. M. Khusro, *Economic and Social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition*, p. 108.

<sup>61</sup> *Eighteenth Session of All-India Kisan Sabha*, p. 41.

per cent of the cases, some sort of written agreements existed,<sup>62</sup> and in Baroda district the percentage was even less—no more than 5.6 per cent.<sup>63</sup> The same was the picture found in 1955 in Bhadkad villages (Petlad Taluk), Kaira district, Gujarat State), where 'generally the lease is entered into on oral contract.'<sup>64</sup>

Naturally, under these circumstances tenants do not get written receipts on paying rent; and it is only written receipts that could serve as documents to check the effects of the provisions of tenancy legislation envisaging scaling-down of the rates of rent. In the reports by Prof Desai, Kolhatkar and Mahabal repeatedly quoted earlier are found materials confirming this situation.<sup>65</sup> The Planning Commission stated:

It would greatly assist the enforcement of rents prescribed by legislation if State Governments could make it obligatory on the part of owners to furnish receipts for the rents received by them and if, as is already the practice in some States, tenants could deposit the rents due from them with the appropriate revenue officer, the landowner being advised accordingly.<sup>66</sup>

However, for more than 10 years now India has been getting correct and good advice as to what tenancy legislation should be like, but the condition of the bulk of the tenants has practically remained unchanged. The Planning Commission itself assessed the results of the working of tenancy Acts, to be sure, using rather guarded expressions (*Sauvez les apparences!*) thus: 'The impact of tenancy legislation on the welfare of tenants has been in practice less than was hoped for.'<sup>67</sup>

What, then, are the reasons for such deplorable results

<sup>62</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. 84.

<sup>63</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects*, p. 20.

<sup>64</sup> Bhadkad, *Social and Economic Survey of a Village: A Comparative Study* (Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay), p. 9.

<sup>65</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects*, p. 29; M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. 84.

<sup>66</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 223.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

of nearly 15 years of implementation of tenancy legislation in independent India? The reasons lie in the class nature of the whole of agrarian policy pursued.

We have already noted that the recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Panel on Land Reforms contain many progressive features which, if put into effect, would much improve the tenants' condition. The recommendations were taken into account to some extent in drafting and enacting tenancy acts in the different States. However, it is a truism that it is not enough to pass a law, it is also necessary to create proper conditions for its complete implementation.

And the first elementary condition is that those who are affected by the law should be aware of it. Yet the investigators have reported that most tenants simply had no knowledge of tenancy legislation, even though it had been in force for some years. Thus, in the villages of Gujarat, 60 per cent of the tenants interviewed had no knowledge of the important provisions of the tenancy act, of which they could have taken advantage to improve their condition to some extent.<sup>68</sup> In Shajapur village (West Bengal) only 19.3 per cent of the interviewed heads of households, including 25 per cent of the heads of families of 'cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned,' in other words, tenants and semi-tenants, were not aware of the law fixing the share of crops between landowners and sharecroppers.<sup>69</sup> The Planning Commission, too, has testified to the fact that 'there is also considerable ignorance on the part of tenants of the rights granted by legislation.'<sup>70</sup>

But even where the tenant knows the provisions of law, he will not find it so simple to avail himself of them. Firstly, to go to court is too expensive and difficult a proposition for a poor and illiterate peasant. Secondly, as truly noted by Prof Desai, 'frequent amendments to the act added to the bewilderment of the peasant and made its effectiveness

<sup>68</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. iii.

<sup>69</sup> *Sahajapur*, p. 123.

<sup>70</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, pp. 222-23.

slow and difficult."<sup>71</sup> Thirdly, with economic and political power in the village in the hands of the landlords, a peasant will not always dare to take action against the landlord even where he has every legal ground to do so. The authors of the report on the inquiry into the working of the tenancy act in Baroda district came to the correct conclusion that under those circumstances the tenant was 'likely to prefer to forego his rights under the act to courting the bitterness in relations with, and the hostility of, the landlord with all its consequences.'<sup>72</sup> Fourthly, the first Panel on Land Reforms had already noted that, as a rule, revenue officers' attitude is against the tenant and in favour of the land-owner.<sup>73</sup> Under these circumstances, it is very difficult for a tenant, even if his name is entered in the village records, to prove in a dispute with the omnipotent landlord a long and continuous occupation of the leased plot so as to obtain full rights of protected tenant established by law. Indeed, quite recently tenants in Kerala State who attempted to obtain occupancy rights through Land Tribunals were refused on the grounds that they had no documents to prove their case. But the whole purport of tenancy legislation is that tenants-at-will, whose rights had not earlier been regulated by law, should become protected tenants. And it was only after 41 days of satyagraha, organized by the Kerala Karshaka Samgham, that the authorities promised due enforcement of the Kerala Agrarian Relations Act.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, where tenants energetically fight for their rights they can take advantage of tenancy legislation in their interests. It is not for nothing that the Planning Commission observed that 'where there is pressure on land and the social and economic position of tenants in the village is weak, it becomes difficult for them to seek the protection

<sup>71</sup> M. B. Desai, *Report on an Enquiry*, p. 2.

<sup>72</sup> V. Y. Kolhatkar and S. B. Mahabal, *An Inquiry into the Effects*, p. 17.

<sup>73</sup> Reports of the Committees of the Panel on Land Reforms, p. 38.

<sup>74</sup> See: *Kisan News* (Monthly Bulletin of the All-India Kisan Sabha), vol. I, No. 4 (January 1962).

of law.<sup>75</sup> What, then, is the way out? Already the first Panel on Land Reforms came close to providing the correct answer to this question when it complained that 'no organized effort was made to make the tenants understand the law and to ensure that they take advantage of it.'<sup>76</sup> In other words, an organized mass movement of the peasantry is an indispensable condition for implementation of tenancy legislation, or, for that matter, of any agrarian legislation.

We determine the nature of tenancy legislation not by their proclaimed purposes but according to how, by whom and in whose interests it is carried out. From this point of view one cannot help arriving at the conclusion, though with regret, that in the implementation of tenancy legislation the tenants' interests were given secondary consideration, and the landlords managed to take full advantage of it for resumption of land for so-called 'self-cultivation.'

Tenancy legislation was a key factor with the aid of which the national bourgeoisie tried to speed up the process of transforming the semi-feudal landlords into capitalist entrepreneurs.

Thus, in India, in the first postwar decade the wholesale eviction of occupancy tenants signified in a way a 'clearing of the land' by landlords for capitalism. It has to be mentioned in this connection that the fact that the semi-feudal landlords had no corvée has made their shift to capitalist farming in India more difficult,<sup>77</sup> as it entails either outright eviction of the peasants or their slow and agonizing expropriation and conversion into farm labourers through cropsharing.

The shift of landlords to capitalist farming, therefore, aggravates class contradictions in the countryside on a new

<sup>75</sup> *Third Five Year Plan*, p. 223.

<sup>76</sup> *Reports of the Committees of the Panel on Land Reforms*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>77</sup> Attention to this important fact was first called by R. A. Ulyanovsky (U. Roslavlev). See: U. Roslavlev, *Osnovniye voprosy sovremennoy agrarnoy stroya v Indii* (Fundamental Questions of the Present-Day Agrarian System in India) in the collection of the articles *Agrarni Vopros na Vostoche* (The Agrarian Question in the East, Moscow, 1933).

basis, contributing to the accumulation of explosive material, which is creating the basis for further development of the revolutionary struggle of the peasant masses.

### Consolidation of Holdings

Alongside the reform of the land tenure are the measures for reducing strip farming and fragmentation of holdings. A characteristic feature of peasant land tenure and cultivation in India is the fragmented holding. It usually consists of small, and often many, strips of land, each lying between the strips of other peasants, and this is the case for farms of both tenants and peasants who own their land.

A great many examples of strip farming can be found in Indian economic literature. According to the published data, holdings in Assam were made up of 4.5 strips on the average, in Ajmer 3.5, in Baroda 4, Bombay 3.3, and in Hyderabad 2.5.<sup>78</sup> Most of the peasant proprietors or tenants possessed no more than one acre, and in such conditions strip farming makes it still more difficult to use even the simplest mechanical implements in farming. Here are a few examples. In Atgam village (Bombay), in 1926-27, 74 per cent of the plots were under an acre;<sup>79</sup> in Palakkurichi village (Madras), in 1936, 80 per cent of the plots were under two acres,<sup>80</sup> and in Allahabad district (Uttar Pradesh), in 1940, 73.2 per cent of the plots in the villages surveyed were under an acre.<sup>81</sup>

The fragmentation of peasant holdings and strip farming are a heritage of communal landholding and land-utilization,

<sup>78</sup> *Rural Baroda*, p. 27; *Agricultural Legislation in India*, vol. II, *Consolidation of Holdings* (Delhi, 1950), p. 11; S. K. Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries in the Hyderabad State, 1950-1951* (Hyderabad, 1951), p. 94.

<sup>79</sup> G. Mukhtyar, *Life and Labour in a Gujarat Village* (London, 1930), p. 115.

<sup>80</sup> *Some South Indian Villages: A Re-survey* (Madras, 1940), p. 340.

<sup>81</sup> Sridhar Misra, *Agricultural Holdings in the District of Allahabad* (Allahabad, 1944), p. 40.

when each member of the community was allotted plots on land of different grades, irrigated and dry. Besides, reflected in strip farming is the further subdivision of peasant holdings, with most peasants not having enough land as it is.

In some provinces and princely states (the Punjab, the Central Provinces, the United Provinces, Delhi, Kashmir, Baroda and Madras) when the country was still under British colonial rule, beginning with the twenties of the present century, measures were taken to consolidate peasant holdings by the exchanging of plots between individual holders. With subdivision of peasant holdings and tenure continuing, the process went on with great difficulty. In the Punjab, for instance, where the exchange of plots between individual holders proceeded on a most extensive scale, it took from 10 to 15 years to create compact holdings in a single village.<sup>82</sup>

After the attainment of independence by India efforts to consolidate holdings were begun in some other areas in the country too, mainly compulsorily. Special legislation for the compulsory consolidation of holdings was enacted in Bombay in 1947, in the Punjab in 1948, in Pepsu and Saurashtra in 1951, in Uttar Pradesh in 1953, and so on. According to data for 1955, exchange of plots was carried out in the States of Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab, Delhi, Pepsu, Madhya Pradesh, Bombay and Saurashtra. By the end of 1957 similar legislation had been passed in most of the States.<sup>83</sup> The consolidation of holdings is regarded as one of the important measures for the reorganization of the Indian countryside envisaged by the First and Second Five Year Plans for the country's economic development. This measure has diminished the dispersal of operational holdings to a certain extent, and this promoted the advancement of agricultural production.

In Bombay villages where consolidation of holdings was carried out the number of plots dropped by 51.5 per cent,

<sup>82</sup> R. N. Kaushik, 'Consolidation of Holdings in India,' ASI, vol. VIII, No. 4 (July 1953), p. 250.

<sup>83</sup> Gulzari Lal Nanda, *Progress of Land Reforms in India*, p. 13.

in Madhya Pradesh by 81.6, and in Delhi by 70.8 per cent. The size of individual plots in these villages went up on the average respectively in Bombay by 105 per cent, in Madhya Pradesh by 40 per cent, and in Pepsu 10-fold.<sup>84</sup> At the same time it should be borne in mind that in exchanging plots it was hard to select lands of similar quality for all participants in the exchange, and as a result some of the peasants found the plots allotted to them to be poorer in respect of fertility, location and irrigation. A survey of the consolidation carried out in Karegaon taluk (Bombay) showed that 55 per cent of the peasants who took part in the exchange were brought to ruin, their gross produce dropping to a third of earlier years; 24 per cent neither lost nor gained anything, and only slightly more than 20 per cent were gainers.<sup>85</sup>

In enacting consolidation, each State fixed the size of minimum indivisible holding, the law prohibiting a further subdivision of the landholding where the division might result in the emergence of a new holding smaller than the minimum fixed. Although the absolute size of minimum holdings is small (for instance, in Uttar Pradesh 6.5 acres, in Vindhya Pradesh 5-10, and in Bhopal 15 acres), there is in each State a fairly large group of landholders with plots below the fixed limit and they are therefore faced with the possibility of forced alienation of their lands. In fact, in Bombay, by the middle of 1953 as a result of the work done on consolidation of holdings in 767 villages the number of individual holdings in these villages went down from 273,575 to 142,079.<sup>86</sup>

Those who gained most from the consolidation were the upper stratum of the peasantry, for whom the elimination of strip farming facilitated the shift to capitalist farming. Characteristically, it was the larger peasant holdings that were often the most scattered. For example, in Dusi village (Madras) one of the largest holdings—11.94 acres—was

<sup>84</sup>ASI, vol. VIII, No. 4 (July 1953), p. 252.

<sup>85</sup>Cross Roads, 9 May 1952.

<sup>86</sup>Indian Rural Economy, Ed. by P. Bhatnagar and others (Bombay, 1954), p. 128.

comprised of 26 plots,<sup>87</sup> and in Palakkurichi village (also in Madras) a holding of 90.12 acres consisted of 57 plots.<sup>88</sup> In 1950, in Kanpur district (Uttar Pradesh) households whose scattered land was comprised of more than eight plots made up 12.4 per cent of the total households but amounted to 39 per cent of the total land area.<sup>89</sup> The bulk of the farming is done on one or several plots, and only the holdings of the upper stratum of the peasantry often consist of a score or more separate fields. In Atgam village (Bombay), for instance, of 431 holdings only 19 were comprised of more than 20 separate plots.<sup>90</sup> The explanation for it is that rich peasants add to their holdings by buying up plots of their fellow villagers lying in strips all over the village's arable field.

The peasant upper stratum is therefore interested in the consolidation of landholdings. At the same time consolidation accelerates the process of eventual pauperization of some groups of the poorest peasantry and their conversion into landless agricultural labourers or paupers, completely squeezed out of the sphere of agricultural production.<sup>91</sup>

The legislative measures for consolidation of holdings, on the one hand, promote the expansion of the farms of rich peasants and ryot landlords, and, on the other, accelerate the process of ruination and proletarianization of the bulk of the peasantry, thereby furthering the development of agricultural capitalism in India.

<sup>87</sup> *Some South Indian Villages*, p. 184.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>89</sup> S. K. Iyengar, *Rural Economic Enquiries*, p. 96.

<sup>90</sup> G. Mukhtyar, *Life and Labour in a Gujarat Village*, p. 114.

<sup>91</sup> C. E. Pike, Agricultural Attache of the US Embassy in Delhi, once noted that, according to his observations, the peasants expressed dissatisfaction with the consolidation of holdings legislation [Clarence E. Pike, 'Land Reform in India,' *Foreign Agriculture*, Vol. XVII, No. 6 (June 1953), p. 117].

## CHAPTER IV

### Conclusions

IN a work of this size, the author did not set himself the object of examining in detail the economic, social and political consequences of the agrarian reforms in India.<sup>1</sup> It should also be borne in mind that the structural changes in the country's agrarian economy, which, in their turn, have determined the changes in the status of the different classes of rural society, are determined not only, and in many ways not so much, by that portion of the agrarian legislation, that was actually implemented, as by the effect of the immanent laws of capitalist development shown, in particular, in the whole range of the state-capitalist measures carried out in the countryside through 'community projects', service cooperatives, and so on.

After analysing the different aspects of agrarian legislation in independent India, the author limited his task to an appraisal of the class nature of the reforms and to a study of the trends in the changing class structure of rural India as a result of their implementation.

In the previous chapters we have tried to show that there is a difference between the declared and actual aims of the agrarian policy pursued.

The agrarian reforms, which have introduced changes in the system of land tenure and cultivation, are of a typically bourgeois-landlord nature: the shift by landlords and the upper stratum of the peasantry to the operation of their

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, two works in which their authors have analysed the social and economic consequences of the agrarian reforms became available to the author only when the translation had been completed, viz. Bhowani Sen's *Evolution of Agrarian Relations in India* (PPH, Delhi, February 1962); R. R. Mishra's *Effects of Land Reforms in Saurashtra: Report of a Survey, Sponsored by Research Programme Committee, Planning Commission* (Bombay, 1961).

farms on a capitalist basis is speeded up at the expense of the bulk of the peasantry.

An objectively progressive feature of the reforms is that they have considerably reduced the sphere of semi-feudal exploitation of the peasantry. On the bulk of the area of zamindari estates alienated through the land reforms, the peasant tenants have acquired the status of landholders, who pay land revenue directly to the state. That primarily is the explanation for the drop in the percentage of leased land from 42 in 1950-51 to 20-24 in 1953-54 of total area under cultivation<sup>2</sup>. The shrinkage of area under leases is due in part to the eviction of tenants from the land.

Thus, sample surveys conducted in the middle and later 1950's have shown that in some districts, taluks and villages a far larger part of the land under cultivation, and often the bulk, is held under leases. This, however, does not alter the basic fact that for India as a whole at that time from I/4 to I/3 of total operated land was held under some form of semi-feudal lease.

<sup>2</sup> Without question, the figures are not altogether exact, which in all fairness has been pointed out by B. S. Mavinkurve, a member of the staff of the Reserve Bank of India, in the work cited earlier. In sample surveys the area under different forms of cropsharing was not taken fully into account, especially where cropsharing is not recognised by law as tenancy (as, for instance, in Uttar Pradesh). At the same time, neither in 1950-51 nor 1953-54 were the small and tiny plots of land leased in by the upper stratum of the peasantry from the poor peasants separated from the total area of leased land. (These leases are not feudal but capitalist-type leases). We can agree with Mavinkurve that in both cases the area of leased land was somewhat underestimated but since the sample surveys in 1950-51 and 1953-54 were conducted by very similar methods, a comparison of the data yielded is legitimate and it shows the main trend in the development of the country's agrarian economy. The data obtained in sample surveys of individual villages conducted in 1953-57 by States show that in conducting the sample survey of 1953-54 the percentage of leased land was put somewhat too low, the explanation for it apparently being that that part of crop-sharers who rent tiny plots of land and with respect to their condition could hardly be distinguished from farm labourers possessing an allotment, were not included in the category of tenants. Such an adjustment, however, would involve only the smallest farms which accounted for some ten per cent of total operated area, and hence would little affect the percentage of the leased area as a whole.

Thus, the feudal elements proved to be considerably cramped in the sphere of agricultural production and no longer dominate it.

They occupy a stronger position in the sphere of circulation—in the farm produce market and agricultural credit. Despite the measures taken by the state to regulate wholesale trade in foodgrains; increase the number of regulated markets, and the development of marketing cooperatives, pre-capitalist merchant capital controls the agricultural market to this day. True, in recent years the process of pre-capitalist merchant capital developing into full-fledged capital has gathered momentum and become accelerated.

In the sphere of agricultural credit too usurer's capital predominates as before: according to figures for the middle and latter half of the 1950's it accounted for 70 to 90 per cent of total loans, depending on the area.

The state has given organisational and financial support (in particular since the nationalisation of the Imperial Bank into the State Bank of India in 1955) to the development of different types of agricultural cooperatives, mainly credit cooperatives, but also marketing and consumers' cooperatives.

The following figures show the development of the primary village credit cooperatives:<sup>3</sup>

	1951-52	1955-56	1960-61
Number of cooperatives (in thousands)	107	160	210
Number of their members (in millions)	4.7	8	18
Total short- and medium-term loans made (in million rupees)	242	500	2,000

As a village family in India consists of 5.1 persons on the average, the rural credit cooperatives today embrace not less than 90 million persons, or some 25 per cent of the country's rural population. To be sure, this does not mean that credit cooperatives have become the chief source of agricultural credit. According to data compiled by the Rural Credit Survey Follow-up for 1956-57 and subsequent years these cooperatives accounted for only some 10-15 per

<sup>3</sup> Review of the Cooperative Movement in India, 1952-54 (Reserve Bank of India, Bombay, 1956), pp. 7, 9; Third Five Year Plan, p. 204.

cent of total loans. There can be no question, however, that the development of credit and other forms of agricultural cooperatives has strengthened the position of the capitalist elements in the countryside. Investigations of the activity of the cooperatives have shown that they are run by the landlords and upper crust of the peasantry who in the main use them in their own interests.

And so, as a result of India's independent economic and political development since 1947, and of the Congress government's agrarian policy (including the implemented agrarian legislation), the feudal elements no longer predominate in landholding, and hence in the sphere of agricultural production, and have been somewhat checked in the sphere of circulation.

However, this does not mean that the main objective of the agrarian reforms (proclaimed or actual), namely, elimination of the pre-capitalist production relations in agriculture, has been fully attained. But, as we have tried to show in the earlier chapters, not even this basic fact is the chief shortcoming of the reforms being carried out.

In approaching the question of the 'efficiency' of the agrarian reforms it is necessary to bear in mind that the criteria of efficiency are social and class categories, which are determined by the interests of the different classes and class groups in society. Neither in India nor in other countries that are less developed economically has the rural population become deeply differentiated and does not at all consist of 'tillers of the soil' or 'landholders'. And while from the point of view of the mass of the peasantry a reform is effective when it ensures the transfer (or compulsory sale) to them of all land they hold under lease so that it becomes their property, from the point of view of classes and social groups who seek through the reforms to pave the way for the conversion of big proprietors into big operators, its effectiveness is determined by the extent to which tenants have given way to farm labourers.

The fundamental question in any agrarian reform is the question of the land. As has been pointed out before, in carrying out the basic objects of an agrarian reform two

principal approaches are found. To leave part of the land to the landlord class, the big landholders, or to distribute it all among the toiling peasants—the two ways of solving the land question, which are determined by the interests of the opposed classes in society.

Today we still find in India a very high concentration of owned and operated land area. Earlier we have cited figures showing the concentration of landownership. In 1953-54, 22 per cent of the surveyed rural families were found to be landless, 52.4 per cent (owners of plots under five acres) held 16.8 per cent of total land, and only 2.43 per cent of the families (owners of plots exceeding 30 acres) held 28 per cent of the land<sup>4</sup>.

Already in 1953-54 (later figures are not available for the country as a whole) 43 per cent of total operated land was concentrated in farms of 20 acres or more, which made up 6.62 per cent of total farms, and farms under 5 acres, which made up 67.68 per cent, comprised 15.6 per cent of total operated land.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the bulk of the land is concentrated in the hands of big landowners and rich peasant households, and the bulk of production units are small and tiny farms of the poor peasantry and the lowest stratum of the middle peasantry.

With respect to forms of land use the bulk of the cultivated area belonged, according to the same data, to the proprietors of the farms and was cultivated by members of the family and hired labourers. True, 39.84 per cent of all households had recourse to leasing land, with the biggest and smallest exceeding 40 per cent.<sup>6</sup> However, the land leased is made up in 1953-54 only 20.34 per cent of the total land in all households. In the lowest group, those holding five acres or less, the percentage was, naturally higher up to 25-30<sup>7</sup>.

The chief problem—that of the land—remains unsolved. However, today the bulk of the middle peasantry and even

<sup>4</sup> National Sample Survey, No. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., No. 30, pp. 58-59.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

the poor peasantry operate their own and not leased land: their status as landholders has changed.

The changes in the system of land tenure and cultivation are the chief results of the implementation of agrarian legislation.

As we have pointed out earlier, the main purpose of the agrarian reforms was to speed up capitalist development in agriculture. While there are no exact figures from which to judge the proportion of the capitalist sector in India's agriculture, the figures on the employment of hired labour are highly instructive.

The results of sample agro-economic investigations in villages and micro-districts published in recent years and summarised, in particular, in such series as Farm Management Studies, Bench-Mark Survey Reports, Rural Credit Survey Follow-Up Reports, and so on, show a profound property and class differentiation in the Indian peasantry, a rise in employment of hired labour in the upper groups, and proletarianization of the lower (that is, for size of holdings) groups.<sup>8</sup>

To illustrate, we shall give only our calculations made on the basis of an analysis of the data of the Eighth and Ninth Rounds of the National Sample survey.

In 1953-54, 11 per cent of total farms in India were operated wholly or mainly by hired labour. But altogether 30 to 40 per cent of all farms hired labourers at different times during the year. According to the same data, 24-28 per cent of all households supplied hired labourers. According to data of a 1955 survey, 40 per cent of the gainfully employed agricultural population worked for hire all (or part) of their working time, and two-thirds of them, or some 30 per cent of the total gainfully employed agricultural population, spent the bulk of their working time working as agricultural labourers, thereby representing the agricultural proletariat which had already become formed.

<sup>8</sup> A detailed analysis of these materials is given by the author in the book *The Agrarian Question in Contemporary India*, now being prepared for the press.

We have no data showing what area was cultivated by their labour, but it is known that the bulk (64 per cent) of agricultural workers (farm servants and casual labourers) worked on farms defined as based mainly on the use of hired labour. True, a fairly considerable part of these farms are small or even tiny (possibly of those who take seasonal jobs, artisans, rural teachers, and so on). However, what is important is something else: in 1953-54, 50.8 per cent of all farm labourers worked on farms of more than 15 acres in size, which made up 8.6 per cent of total households and embraced more than half of the total land. In the large farms, those over 20 acres, some 80 per cent of total land was cultivated by the labour of members of the family and hired labourers, or roughly 35 per cent of the total area under cultivation. It goes without saying that in a number of arid areas, where even the lower groups have larger holdings, a good number of these farms too were based mainly on the labour of members of the family. But if we take into account the figures of the labour of members of the family, of the distribution of farm labourers and the use of hired labour on farms ranging between five and 20 acres in irrigated areas, we may estimate the area cultivated wholly or mainly by hired labour in 1953-54 as approximately 25-30 per cent.

Thus, judging by the distribution of the operated area, the capitalist sector has become the leading, though not the dominant, sector in India's agriculture.

It will be correct to say that neither the capitalist nor the feudal sector predominates today in agricultural production. The predominant position, both for operated area and labour force, is held by the small-scale commodity peasant economy.

True, the capitalist sector in the country's agriculture is still in the process of 'formation', but we must not underestimate the far-reaching social and political consequences of the development of the hiring relationship in the countryside, however antediluvian and transitional the forms in

which it has occurred<sup>9</sup>.

What are the changes taking place in the status of the principal classes in the Indian countryside?

The class relationships in the countryside today are characterised above all by the high concentration of property in land. In 1953-54, 4.7 per cent of the landowners who were living in villages and had holdings of 25 acres or more had concentrated in their hands 36.17 per cent of total land. The point is, that, of the total area of leased land roughly half belonged to owners who lived in towns, which was some 10 per cent of total operated area. At the other pole, the proprietors of holdings under five acres, who made up approximately 67 per cent of total land-owners, owned only 16.32 per cent of total land.<sup>10</sup>

In the existing conditions it was wrong to include the whole group of holders of more than 25 acres in the category of landlords, as in some of the arid areas with poor soil holdings of 20 to 30 acres were still the size of peasant holdings. However, for the larger and more important agricultural regions holdings of more than 25 acres (and here and there even those of more than 15-20 acres) were the size of holdings of landlords or rich peasants.

Although they made up but 8.83 per cent of those who leased out land, this upper group accounted for 45.4 per cent of the land leased out by proprietors living in villages.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the landlords, the bulk of whom unquestionably are to be found in this group, were the chief vehicles of pre-capitalist methods of exploitation of the peasantry.

For the landlord class as a whole, however, the leasing out of land ceased to be the principal form of exploitation of the direct producers. According to the same data, in 1953-54 this upper group of proprietors leased out only some 15 per cent of the land belonging to them. Even if

<sup>9</sup> Therein, it appears to me, lies the main shortcoming of an excellent article on this problem by Baudhayan Chatterji: 'Agricultural Labour, Enterprise and Land Reforms in India,' *Enquiry*, No. 2-3 (Delhi, 1959-1960).

<sup>10</sup> *The National Sample Survey*, No. 36.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

an adjustment is made for concealed leasing and the figure is raised to 20-25 per cent it will not alter the basic conclusion that the use of hired labour was the main form of operation of the farm by big landowners already in the middle 1950's. To be sure, as has been pointed out earlier, roughly half of the total land leased by peasants belonged to landowners living in towns. If on the basis of a comparative study of a number of other sources we are to allow that ten per cent of this part of leased land did not belong to landlords but to peasants doing seasonal work in towns, a re-computation will show that all landlords, including those living in towns, leased out approximately 32 per cent of their land.

This general conclusion is confirmed also by the approximate coincidence of the extent of concentration of landownership and land tenure in the upper group of holders of more than 25 acres.

Studies by States conducted in 1957-59 have shown that these big farms have accounted for 50 to 70 per cent, and sometimes more, of total marketed grain, with a very considerable rise (as compared with the average for all farms) in the percentage of the marketed part in total gross harvest of foodgrains in these farms.

According to available data, the big farms are the chief consumers of fertilizers and high-grade seed, and it is mainly in them that are to be found the mechanically-driven irrigation pumps the country has, practically all privately-owned tractors and other machines available in the countryside.

In recent years many big landowners have invested accumulated capital in factories for processing agricultural raw material. To illustrate, they are the principal owners of rice mills in Bengal, Bihar, Andhra and other rice-producing regions. The construction of sugar refineries on a cooperative basis is widespread in South India. Members of these cooperatives are local landlords and rich peasants.

With agriculture developing along capitalist lines the process of ruination and proletarianization of the bulk of the peasantry is growing more intensely all the time.

It should be underscored that the development of capitalism in agriculture of India today is proceeding mainly on the old technical basis, as it did before the agrarian reforms.

True, in landlords' and rich peasants' capitalist-run farms there was an insignificant advance in the capital structure, which is proved in particular by the agricultural machinery censuses of 1945, 1951 and 1956 (Table 15).

TABLE 15  
*Agricultural Machinery and Implements*  
(in thousands)

Implements	1945	1951	1956
Ploughs: total	27,781.3	32,710.6	37,982.0
—wooden	27,306.3	31,779.5	36,615.1
—iron	481	931.1	1,366.9
Sugarcane crushers: total	489	540.7	568.3
—operated by bullocks	480.6	519.5	545.0
—power-driven	9	21.2	23.3
Oil engines	12	95.1	122.2
Electric pumps for irrigation	8.6	29.8	54.8
Tractors: total	4.5	8.4	21
—government-owned	—	1.5	3.3
—privately-owned	—	6.9	17.7

Source: *Indian Livestock Census, 1951*, vol. I (Summary Tables), 1955, pp. xviii, 46; *Eighth All-India Livestock Census, 1956* (Summary Tables), 1958, p. 3.

Nevertheless, Table 15 shows that India's agriculture had an insignificant amount of machines and other equipment. It is enough to point out that in 1956 iron ploughs made up less than four per cent of the total number of ploughs, and one tractor for every 15,000 acres of cultivated land and 28 villages. An interesting sidelight is the fact that the rate of increase in the number of machines, excepting tractors, used in agriculture in 1951-56 was considerably lower than in 1945-51. Evidently the upper stratum of the peasantry had mainly used up the money accumulated

during the war years when farm produce brought good prices. All these indicate the extreme limitations of the home market for machinery and improved farm implements.

True, in 1961 the number of tractors used in the agriculture was provisionally estimated as 34,297 (net increase in 1956-61 made up 63.5 per cent).<sup>12</sup> But the overall picture has not essentially changed.

Even the bulk of the prosperous peasant households cannot afford to buy machinery. According to a sample survey conducted in 1951-52 by the Reserve Bank of India, capital investments (not including money outlays on land and live-stock) by the upper stratum of the peasantry whose households averaged 26 acres was Rs 336 a year.<sup>13</sup> In 1954-55 a tractor cost about Rs 10,000.<sup>14</sup> Landlords and rich peasants alike have to resort therefore to long-term government credit to buy machinery.<sup>15</sup>

There was a certain rise in the use of fertilizers too: consumption of ammonium sulphate went up from 276,000 tons in 1951-52 to 1,184,000 tons in 1959-60, and of super-phosphate from 78,000 tons to 34,000 in the same period<sup>16</sup>. In 1954 the government retail price of a ton of ammonium sulphate was Rs 345<sup>17</sup> and according to calculations made by Professor P. C. Mahalanobis an acre of rice field re-

<sup>12</sup> ASI, vol. XVII, No. 1 (April, 1962), p. 122.

<sup>13</sup> All India Rural Credit Survey, *Report of the Committee of Direction*, vol. I, *The Survey Report*, part I, *Rural Families* (Bombay, 1956), p. 627.

<sup>14</sup> N. Prasada Rao, *Ceiling on Landholdings* (A Note), (New Delhi, 1955), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> In May-July 1955, for instance, the Government of Madhya Pradesh granted loans totalling Rs. 92,000 for the purchase of 11 tractors and Rs. 117,000 for the purchase of 39 irrigation pumps (ASI, vol. X, No. 3, p. 181; No. 4, p. 247; No. 5, p. 325). An indication of government policy in the sphere of agricultural credits is found in the following allotment of loans in Punjab: in 1947-48 to 1953-54 the grantees of big loans who made up but one per cent of the total recipients, received 35 per cent of total loans. See N. Prasada Rao, *Ceiling on Landholdings*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> AICC Economic Review, No. 7-8, 1957, p. 85; ASI, vol. XV, No. 5, August 1960, pp. 573-74.

<sup>17</sup> ASI, vol. IX, No. 2, May 1954, p. 15.

quired from 50 to 100 kilograms of this fertilizer.<sup>18</sup> In other words, it takes a ton of this chemical to fertilize 10 to 12 acres, and hence even rich peasants are not always in a position to buy enough nitrates for their farms. Notwithstanding the growing use of fertilizers in recent years Prof Mahalanobis estimated that in 1955-56 India used no more than a twentieth of the amount of nitrates it needed for its agriculture.<sup>19</sup>

Under these conditions a good part of rural capitalists continue to operate their farms on the same old technical basis, in other words, using draught animals for tractor power; and even in the areas boasting of the highest development of capitalism in agriculture, the proportion of farm-land cultivated with the aid of machines is insignificant. For instance, in the Punjab, tractors were used on 212,000 acres of private farms in 1954, or roughly 9 per cent of the total area of large households (those of more than 30 acres).<sup>20</sup>

With the bulk of the peasantry landless or land-poor, the relative agrarian overpopulation increasing all the time, and the supply of hired labour in agriculture exceeding demand, capitalist-type landowners and rich peasants find it advantageous to employ extensively manual labour. By reducing wages of agricultural labourers to the lowest possible level and with a low level of capital structure of their farms, landlords and rich peasants have cut production costs considerably. They often prefer to invest in moneylending and trading, taking advantage of difficulties in the food supply for profiteering operations.

Thus, the specific features characteristic of the development of capitalism in India's agriculture following the agrarian reforms are the same that were pointed out in Chapter I of this work.

At the present rate of India's industrial development,

<sup>18</sup> National Institute of Sciences of India, *Science and National Planning*, Anniversary Address by the President P. C. Mahalanobis (5 January 1958), p. 21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Some Points on the Question of Ceilings*, pp. 54, 57.

continued development of capitalism in agriculture contributed to the growth of the army of labour reserves, aggravating the problem of unemployment. According to the sample survey conducted in 1952-53 by the Indian Statistical Institute, 28,200,000 workers in rural localities worked less than five days a month.<sup>21</sup> By comparing data of sample surveys conducted in 1952-55, Prof Mahalanobis concluded that between 10 and 12 million people in India had no work at all or worked an insignificant number of hours a week, and between 25 and 30 million were employed from half to two-thirds of their normal working time.<sup>22</sup>

The low agro-technical standard of even the big farms persists mainly because the landlords and the upper stratum of the rich peasants, though in the main they operate the land belonging to them on a capitalist basis, do not invest a good part of their profits in the sphere of production but use it to lend money at high interest rates and to speculate in farm produce. The relatively high price of tractors and other machines too limit the mechanization of even the big farms. Lastly, a third and no less important factor is the enormous and constantly increasing relative agrarian overpopulation, owing to which landlords and rich peasants are always able to cut production costs by using manual labour at extremely low wages.

Characteristic of the activity of the Indian landlord today are the closely interwoven capitalist and semi-feudal features. But there can be no question that today the feudal elements in agriculture have shrunk considerably. The chief type of landlord in contemporary Indian village is no longer the feudal-type zamindar or absentee jagirdar;

<sup>21</sup> In Punjab, for example, in 1954, 7,500 tenants were dispossessed as a result of the switch-over to the use of tractors (*Some Points on the Question of Ceilings*, p. 54).

<sup>22</sup> *Science and National Planning*, p. 9. According to the Planning Commission itself India's army of unemployed would remain above the 7 million figure during the Second Five Year Plan period (E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Agrarian Reforms*, New Delhi, 1956, p. 14). Yet millions of acres of government and landlords' land remained uncultivated (*ibid.*, p. 15). In Uttar Pradesh, between 1951-52 and 1954-55 there was even a drop in the acreage under cultivation.

but the owner of a big farm, more and more engaging in the different forms of a bourgeois enterprise.

Many zamindar landlords in the former zamindari areas differ little in respect of their economic activity from the upper crust of the rich peasantry, with whom they are merging to become a single social stratum. Many contemporary Indian economists call them the 'new rural aristocracy', 'new elite', and so on, in other words, a ruling village stratum.

Side by side with the bourgeoisified landlords, the upper stratum of the peasantry have consolidated their position. Following the abolition of the zamindari system they have received greater freedom in their economic activity and have made use of the advantages gained from the legal rights to property in land and the related reduction in land revenue in a number of States.

The upper crust of the peasantry, like the landlords, use the cooperatives, Community Projects and other state-capitalist measures and organizations to consolidate their economic position.

By the type of their economic activity the rich peasants too are vehicles of capitalist as well as semi-feudal relations. The latter, however, play a much lesser role as such than landlords. The ratio of the income rich peasants get from their capitalist farms to total income is unquestionably higher than that of landlords. Highly indicative in this respect is that in 1953-54 in farms of 10 to 25 acres the proportion of iron ploughs to wooden was twice as high as that in big farms. If we exclude tractors and similarly expensive equipment, the basic capital structure of rich peasants' farms will apparently be higher than of landlord farms. This confirms the well-known principle that the development of peasant capitalism is relatively more progressive than that of landlord capitalism.

The rich peasants, along with landlords, are the principal holders of the land: in 1953-54 proprietors of holdings of 10-25 acres, who comprised 10.6 per cent of total land-owners, held 29.11 per cent of total land.

As is generally known, concentration of the land in the

hands of the rich peasantry is taking place in India mainly through expropriation of the holdings of the poor peasants by means of trade and moneylending operations. In recent years, due to the imposition of a ceiling on future acquisitions, rich peasants too were among the chief buyers of land, and that probably is why the upper crust of the peasantry made use of moneylending operations, which are to this day the chief source of primary accumulation by the rural bourgeoisie. However, moneylending by rich peasants is on a much smaller scale than by landlords.

At the same time, as shown by the Reserve Bank of India's surveys conducted in 1951-52 and 1956-57, the rich peasantry got the bulk of their loans from moneylenders and traders. Since trading and moneylending operations are, as a rule, linked together, in areas such as Bengal, Bihar and Andhra, for instance, where buyers of marketable produce in the villages, besides agents of the big wholesale traders, were landlords owning flour mills and rice mills, the antagonisms between the rich peasants and landlords should be very sharp.

Thus, rich peasants are themselves objects of exploitation by trading and moneylending capital. As owners of farms producing for the market they are especially interested in higher prices on farm produce, in the development of various forms of capital credit and in an up-to-date organization of farm produce market.

The upper stratum of the peasantry also lease out part of their land, but less than the landlords, namely, some 11 per cent. In this sphere the interests of the rich peasants do not clash with the interests of the landlords; rather they clash with those of the mass of tenants, and of the poor peasantry. The same may be said on the question of the land; the rich peasants, side by side with the landlords, hold a considerable part of total land. This problem is especially acute in the irrigated areas, where owners of 7-8 acres often constitute the upper stratum of the peasantry.

The interests of the rich peasantry also conflict with

the interests of the poor peasantry in the hiring of farm labour.

In other words, the development of capitalism in India's agriculture has led to the fact that along some lines of basic class contradictions the interests of the upper crust of the peasantry clash with the interests of the bulk of the peasantry (the land, tenancy, and the hiring of farm labourers), and along other lines clash with the interests of the landlords (marketing farm produce and agricultural credit).

Capitalism in India is thus developing in the shape of expansion of landlord and rich peasant farms, and as a result there are complicated relations between the upper stratum of the peasantry and the landlords, on the one hand, and the bulk of the peasantry, on the other.

The further development of capitalism in the countryside is without question the main reason for the certain upswing in agricultural production in the past five years.

Between 1950-51 and 1955-56 total cultivated area went up from 326,000,000 acres to 363,000,000 and irrigated land from 47,000,000 acres in 1947-48 to 56,000,000 in 1955-56.<sup>23</sup>

The extension of cropland by the cultivation of virgin and neglected land, the adding of about 10,000,000 acres to land under irrigation, the rise in the agro-technical level of the bigger farms as a result of the use of more machines and artificial fertilizers and also of better seed, and so on, have led to a gradual increase in the total volume of farm produce. Between 1949-50 and 1957-58 total agricultural production went up 13 per cent. At the close of the First Five Year Plan and the beginning of the Second the largest increase was registered in output of a number of the more important industrial crops: production of cotton went up more than 50 per cent, and jute and sugar cane roughly one-third.<sup>24</sup> Compared with colonial India, where between the two world wars agricultural production either stood still or declined the Republic has made some progress.

<sup>23</sup> *India, 1958: A Reference Annual*, pp. 256-7.

<sup>24</sup> *Area, Production and Average Yield per Acre of Principal Crops in India, 1949-50 to 1957-58* (Delhi, 1958), pp. 98-99.

However, the rise noted in agricultural output is still considerably behind the national economic requirements, in particular to meet the needs of the growing population, primarily the urban, which in the last 10-15 years has increased faster than the rural. So far the problem of providing enough foodstuffs for the population from internal production remains unsolved. Attesting to this, in particular, are the difficulties in food supply experienced in different States and the rise in food imports. As against imports of 800,000 tons in 1954, the imports in 1956 were 1,400,000 tons, and in 1957 3,600,000 tons (the highest imports in postwar years were 4,700,000 tons in 1951).<sup>25</sup>

The explanation for it is as follows: from 30 to 50 per cent of the marketable farm produce comes to the market from the proprietors of small- and medium-sized farms, and a good many of them, though not producing enough, are compelled to sell some of their crop only to pay revenue, interest on loans, rent, and so on. Bigger harvests reaped in good crop years by these farms do not, therefore, lead to any considerable rise in marketable produce. As to the large farms, even though the last ten years have witnessed a certain increase in the average yield, they are unable to meet the growing demand in marketable foodgrain resulting from the increase of 16 million in the urban population between 1951 and 1961, and the increase in the proletarian and semi-proletarian strata in the countryside, who too are consumers of foodgrain brought to the market. That is why, even though between 1949 and 1961 the volume of agricultural production went up 35 per cent, with foodgrains up by 32 per cent, grain imports are going up all the time: in 1948-50 they averaged 2.9 million tons a year, in 1951-56, 2.4 million tons a year, and in 1956-60, 3.4 million tons. The economic and political consequences of it are well known.

In the last ten years agriculture has kept falling more and more behind the other spheres of India's economy and the disproportion formed is seriously retarding the further

<sup>25</sup> India, 1958; A Reference Annual, p. 261.

development of the national economy.

According to data published by the Reserve Bank of India between 1950 and 1958, the rate of saving in agriculture remained at a very low level, namely, 3.8 per cent of the national income in this sector of India's economy. And although in those years agriculture furnished more than half of the total national income, the proportion of accumulation it yielded fluctuated between a third and a fifth of the total accumulation fund.<sup>26</sup>

At the present time, therefore, agriculture possesses very limited possibilities for accumulation of capital needed for accelerating the rate of national economic development.

The slow and relatively small rise in agricultural production in independent India is to be explained primarily by the fact that the agrarian reforms carried out and the different state-capitalist measures enacted in the sphere of agriculture have failed to produce any substantial change in the condition of the bulk of the peasantry. The overwhelming majority of the peasant households belong to the poor strata of the peasantry. The mass of poor peasants and a considerable part of the middle peasants, smarting under the heavy tax burden, the market competition of the bigger farms, and the gulf between the prices of industrial and agricultural products, continue to be exploited by traders and moneylenders, and in some areas are subjected to semi-feudal exploitation. The material condition of the mass of rural population too has not improved.

While the landlords and rich peasants have strengthened their position in the last ten years, there has been practically no change in the position of the bulk of the peasants. We have already shown earlier that the poor peasantry remains landless or land-poor. Every survey conducted in the last decade has shown that their productive and personal consumption remains at the same level.

The formula one meets everywhere in the Indian press that during the first decade of planning 'the rich have grown richer and the poor poorer' fully applies to the In-

<sup>26</sup> Reserve Bank of India Bulletin, 1960, No. 3, p. 321.

dian countryside. The condition of the farm labourers affords a good illustration for this: in face of the rising retail prices between 1951 and 1952 nominal wages dropped by ten per cent.<sup>27</sup>

The incomplete elimination of semi-feudal relations, the failure to solve the land question, the aggravation of contradictions in the country's agrarian economy due to the development of agricultural capitalism—these are all a basis for the further sharpening of class contradictions and class struggle in the countryside.

This should be kept in mind in examining the struggle around the question of imposing a ceiling on holdings. While the democratic forces regard the imposition of a ceiling as the way to eventual complete abolition of landlordism, the bourgeois and landlord circles are striving to ensure through the imposition of a ceiling the transformation of landlords' estates into big capitalist farms.

The economic and political difficulties encountered by the national bourgeoisie in their attempts to speed up the development of agricultural capitalism by putting through the agrarian reforms, the change in the internal political situation in recent years, and the tremendous effect on India of the solution of the peasant and agrarian question in the socialist countries—all of it together has been the basis for the National Congress advancing a programme for promoting producers' cooperatives in the countryside. As far back as 1956 two Indian government delegations visited China to study the agrarian reforms there, and their reports recommended that China's experience in farming cooperation should be thoroughly considered. Following the publication of the reports a long and heated discussion went on within the Congress and in the country at large, ending in the adoption by its Nagpur session in January 1959 of a resolution calling for the utmost development of the cooperative movement in agriculture (in the first place credit, marketing and consumers' coopera-

<sup>27</sup> See: *Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry Report*, vol. I, (Delhi, 1961).

tives), in order to launch three years later a full-scale movement for producers' cooperatives in the countryside.

This resolution envisages that farmers who are members of cooperatives would retain ownership of their land and would receive a share of the net income in proportion to the amount of their land handed over to the cooperative.

With landownership by landlords preserved, agricultural producers' cooperatives can only be a screen for capitalist exploitation of the peasantry. There are already examples of this kind in India today. Jawaharlal Nehru has pointed out that some of the 1,357 agricultural producers' cooperatives in existence at the beginning of 1958 were formed with the intention of circumventing agrarian reform legislation.<sup>28</sup>

Putting forward the problem of producers' cooperatives in the Indian countryside among the country's basic internal problems shows that the struggle between two ways of solving the peasant and agrarian question has entered a new phase.

1866.9

<sup>28</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Joint Cooperative Farming,' *AICC Economic Review*, vol. X, No. 21 (1959), p. 6.



## GLOSSARY

**Abwab**—minor taxes and dues; also school and road rates under the British.

**Adhiar**—sharecropper, sharer (owner) of the land.

**Alamaliks**—the top-rung of the feudal hierarchy in the Punjab.

**Asami**—A holder of rights in shifting cultivation.

**Bajra**—pearl millet.

**Bargadar**—sharecropper, generally of Bengal and Eastern India.

**Barkhali**—land entrusted to individuals holding special position in society, especially in Western India and Pepsu.

**Barkhalidar**—holder of Barkhali lands.

**Begar**—labour or duties owed by a tenant or one of the lower orders in the hierarchy to the landlord or powerful people in the village. It is actually a sort of forced labour.

**Benami**—holding or transferring land to fictitious persons to escape the provisions of law.

**Bhoodan**—literally, land-gift. A movement started by a leading disciple of Gandhi, Vinoba Bhave, to collect land as gift from landowners to be distributed free among poor peasants and landless labourers.

**Bhumidar**—holder of rights in land except that of rent.

**Biswedar**—holder of biswa, the right of a cultivator to cut one-twentieth of bigha before the harvest division, especially in Rajasthan and North West India.

*Diwani*—land or estates or villages allotted to high revenue officers for their services during Mughal period.

*Girasdar*—holder of intermediary rights in land, especially in Gujarat.

*Gramdan*—a variant of the Bhoojan, where an entire village is given as a gift.

*Inam*—land or other gift given to an individual by the ruler. The terms of the gift vary from place to place.

*Inamdar*—the recipient of inam and his descendants.

*Jagir*—the rights to revenue held by a jagirdar.

*Jagirdar*—a person granted a portion or all of the revenue of a village for services rendered to the King or Raja. Also the local political chief.

*Jotedar*—cultivator, often small peasant.

*Khas*—chief officer under the Mughals; therefore collection of revenue by officers without intermediaries between them and cultivators; and later lands cultivated by zamindars.

*Khatedar*—holder of state land in Gujarat, especially Baroda.

*Khudkasht*—land cultivated by the landowner.

*Mahalwari*—system of ownership of lands known as mahal, i.e., landed estates belonging to one or several co-sharing zamindars. Assessed as one unit at settlement; may be one or more villages or parts of one or more villages.

*Malguzari*—the system by which taxes are collected by the Malguzar and passed on to the government.

*Malik*—literally, owner, lord. Landowner is known by this name in certain areas.

*Malmatadar*—revenue official responsible to fix the price of land.

**Muafidar**—holder of tax-free land, mostly as gift from rulers for services rendered.

**Mukaradar**—holder of government land on special terms.

**Mukhya**—chief of the elected village body, panchayat; also police chief occasionally.

**Nazarana**—a gift from tenant to his landlord, more in the nature of a bribe. Custom has made this often an obligatory due, especially on occasions like the renewal of lease.

**Patta**—a lease or written settlement of the land revenue.

**Pattadar**—holder of a patta or a co-sharer in a written settlement of the land revenue.

**Patwari**—the village accountant, usually hereditary.

**Ryot**—peasant or cultivator.

**Ryotwari**—areas originally settled directly with the cultivator individually, mostly in Madras and Bombay provinces. Over the past century differences in complexity between ryotwari and zamindari areas tended to disappear.

**Sajehdar**—sharecropper.

**Sajehdari**—system of sharecropping, especially in Eastern UP.

**Sanjhi**—partner in cultivation.

**Saraf-i-khas**—land awarded to government officials in Central India in Mughal period.

**Saranjamdar**—feudal chief in Western India.

**Sarvodaya**—the philosophy and movement founded by Mahatma Gandhi. Aim: well-being of all. Considered an alternative to and a negation of class struggle.

**Sir**—land cultivated by the owner. Variously defined and limited by laws. Tenant rights did not accrue on sir if it were let.

*Sirdar*—holder of a perpetual tenure of sir. Defined in UP Zamindari Abolition Act of 1951, etc.

\**Taluk*—comprises a group of villages as a revenue unit, smaller than the district.

*Talukdar*—a revenue farmer of a taluk. He also possessed judicial authority, frequently engaged in general management of the land and wielded political power independent of any formal grants. Often reduced zamindars to the status of occupancy tenants. In some areas like Oudh, recognised as landlord by the British.

*Veth*—labour rent, a lighter form of forced labour.

*Zamindar*—originally the chief village authority in North India, with minor judicial and revenue duties. He managed the village economy generally and even cultivated part of land. After the permanent settlement British authorities accepted him as the landlord.

*Zamindari*—the lands or village or villages under zamindar.

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